The Work of Ian McEwan:
A Psychodynamic Approach

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Abstract

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This thesis traces the 'metaplot' of Ian McEwan's progress, through his professional writing. Completely unknown in 1971, his work has attracted increasing recognition, culminating in the Booker prize in 1998.

Early in his career, he gained access to elements of his unconscious through free-association, active imagination, meditation and the use of recreational drugs. These elements, which surfaced gradually and piecemeal, include strong feelings associated with the Oedipus complex, difficulties with masculine self-identification, feelings of rejection, unresolved grief, wishes to regress to the latency period of childhood, and sexuality contaminated with anal-sadistic power issues.

McEwan dealt with these themes by creating characters who expressed them through sexual deviations and violence or acted them through to their logical conclusion. Thus he was able to confront previously repressed aspects of his inner life and resolve some of his emotional problems in safety, while availing himself of rich material for his fiction.

His writing is not autobiographical, but it will be demonstrated that events in his life and his changing beliefs and values are reflected in his work. He achieves an illusion of authenticity by including real people and events, familiar to readers from recent history and the news, in vividly described settings. He shares with the reader his interest in advances in science and his concerns about the dangers facing mankind and the evils of authoritarian and patriarchal structures in the microcosm and macrocosm of human institutions. He synthesises these components under a strong narrative shelter of complex plots, dramatic suspense, unexpected thrills and shocks.

The psychodynamic interpretations offered in this thesis depend on a detailed study of McEwan's published work. Their aim is to isolate the separate threads in the fabric of his fiction and demonstrate the maturation and increasing sophistication of his work.

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(With special thanks to my mother)

List of Abbreviations

A	Ian McEwan, *Amsterdam* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998).
BD	Ian McEwan, *Black Dogs* (London: Picador, 1993).
CG	Ian McEwan, *The Cement Garden* (London: Picador, 1980).
CS	Ian McEwan, *The Comfort of Strangers* (London: Picador, 1982).
CT	Ian McEwan, *The Child in Time* (London: Picador, 1988).
D	Ian McEwan, *The Daydreamer* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).
EL	Ian McEwan, *Enduring Love* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997).
FLLR	Ian McEwan, *First Love, Last Rites* (London: Picador, 1976).
I	Ian McEwan, *The Innocent* (London: Picador, 1990).
IBS	Ian McEwan, *In Between the Sheets* (London: Picador, 1979).
IG	Ian McEwan, *The Imitation Game: Three Plays for Television* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981).
MA	Ian McEwan, *A Move Abroad: Or Shall We Die? and The Ploughman's Lunch* (London: Picador, 1989).
MM	C. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Ark, 1984).
NI	John Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview* (London: Methuen, 1985).
OSWD	Ian McEwan, *Or Shall We Die?* in *A Move Abroad: Or Shall We Die? and The Ploughman's Lunch* (London: Picador, 1989).
PL	Ian McEwan, *The Ploughman's Lunch* in *A Move Abroad: Or Shall We Die? and The Ploughman's Lunch* (London: Picador, 1989).
Ryan	Kiernan Ryan, *Ian McEwan* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994).
Slay	Jack Slay, Jr., *Ian McEwan* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996).

Chapter 1 - Why the Psychodynamic Approach?

> If you are going to write a novel the subject has to be very appealing: it really has to be something that draws you, even if it is painful, because you are going to have to live with it so long. (*NI*, p. 190)

The same can be said of a PhD thesis, and it was just such a thought that finally decided me to study Ian McEwan's work. The quality of his prose is so high that it is easy to sustain interest throughout many readings. It is terse, dry and evocative of powerful emotions. His grammar is meticulous, his words precise and his style direct. When writing about his work, it is almost impossible to précis anything without losing most of its impact, and one can seldom do better than quote paragraphs wholesale. Moreover, these quotations provide excellent vignettes of psychological functioning, which lend themselves as convenient foci for the argument presented in this thesis.

Completely unknown in 1971, when he obtained an MA in Creative Writing from the University of East Anglia, his work has attracted increasing recognition. By 1996 Jack Slay Jr. could preface his book with this statement: '[McEwan's] dark portraits of the modern world are works that should be taken to heart. He has undoubtedly, irrevocably influenced contemporary fiction' (*Slay*, p. 8). In 1976, McEwan received the Somerset Maugham Award for *First Love, Last Rites*; in 1983 he won The Evening Standard Award for 'Best Film' and 'Best Screenplay' for *The Ploughman's Lunch.* In 1987 he was awarded the Whitbread Book of the Year prize for *The Child in Time* and in 1997 *Enduring Love* was shortlisted for this prestigious award. Two of his books, *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981) and *Black Dogs* (1992), were shortlisted for the Booker prize and *Amsterdam* won it in 1998. However, this impressive evidence of critical acclaim is only half the story. Plagued by controversy and disapproval, McEwan's early writing earned him the label of 'Ian Macabre'[1] and evoked such comments as Peter Kemp's:

> McEwan's imagination seemed as though it could usefully be swabbed out with Dettol. Vomit, excrement, mucus, slime, globs of squashed frog, rancid food and green mould encrusted his pages. Characters were equally putrid. Sickening smells wafted from their various bodily zones. Their behaviour was noxious.[2]

As late as 1998 *The Hindu Online* commented: '*Amsterdam* has strongly divided critics, with some describing it as little more than a gimmicky, film script'.[3] His peers are authors such as Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie, Fay Weldon, Will Self, Kazuo Ishiguro and Bruce

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[1] This nick name appears in many articles and reviews about him from the early 1980s onwards.
[2] Peter Kemp, 'Hounding the Innocent', *Sunday Times* (14 June 1992), p. 6.
[3] Anon, *British Writer Wins Booker Prize: The Hindu Online* (http://www.webpage.com:80/hindu/daily/981029/01/01290008.htm).

Chatwin, but McEwan dissociates himself from any fixed literary movement: 'I certainly can't locate myself inside any shared, any sort of community taste, aesthetic ambition or critical position...I don't really feel part of anything at all'.[4] The decision to propose a psychodynamic[5] interpretation of his work seems called for by the ambiguity and fascination of his subject matter and the remarkable changes that this has undergone:

> The received wisdom is that McEwan started out in the seventies as a writer obsessed with the perverse, the grotesque, the macabre...But towards the close of the decade his writing underwent a marked evolution...The clammy feel of impending evil which fouled the atmosphere of his early fiction was dispelled by an emerging apprehension of the power of love and the possibility of redemption. (*Ryan*, p. 2)

McEwan's material hints at deep mysteries. To understand these more fully, it seems sensible to turn to the psychodynamic schools, which shed light on the more obscure aspects of the mind and provide a language that makes it possible to think and write about the hidden processes that explain the irrational and bizarre.

The links between psychodynamic theories and serious works of fiction are strong.[6] Both attempt to deepen our understanding of the inner world, employ imaginative elaborations of individual experience and acknowledge the role of introspection and the value of memories, fantasies and dreams. Each, sooner or later, comes up against the mystery of the unconscious. At first glance, they seem to deal with this problem in very different ways, but closer study reveals common roots and shared assumptions.

Many of the concepts embodied by Freud in his theories were borrowed from literature, ancient and modern, or simply picked up from the pool of ideas shared by the educated middle classes of his day. Freud developed the technique of 'free association',[7] which provided him with material for interpretation. Freud's psychoanalytic[8] movement attracted many followers, and underwent two early major schisms.[9] Since then, a plethora of minor schools and models has proliferated. Modern psychodynamic concepts have gradually become less rigid, determinist, reductivist and sexist. Most importantly, from the point of view of the creative arts (and particularly McEwan's work), parts of the

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[4] Christopher Ricks, 'Adolescence and After: an Interview with Ian McEwan', *The Listener* (12 April 1979), p. 527.

[5] Psychodynamic psychology is a branch of psychology dealing with 'the theoretical formulation of the workings (dynamics) of some specific person's mind, without implying that the processes are abnormal', C. Rycroft, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 130.

[6] Jeremy Holmes makes this point persuasively in 'Teaching the Psychotherapeutic Method: Some Literary Parallels', *British Journal of Medical Psychology* (1986), 113 – 121.

[7] Free association is a mode of thinking which allows all thoughts and feelings into consciousness without reservation. It is assumed that all lines of thought lead naturally towards what is significant until interrupted by resistance.

[8] Psychoanalysis is the name given to the work of Sigmund Freud and his school. It is distinguished from Analytical Psychology (the work of Jung and his school) and Individual Psychology (the work of Adler and his school).

[9] Alfred Adler (1870-1937) was an early follower of Freud who seceded and founded his own movement in 1911. The most notable ideas formulated by him are the 'inferiority complex' and 'masculine protest'. C. G. Jung (1875-1961) was a follower of Freud from 1907 to 1913 but later founded his own school.

psychoanalytic system, and numerous isolated concepts belonging to it which deal with the inner world, have reached the public domain. The pool of ideas shared by the educated modern person includes words and information, sometimes garbled, about the stages of development of the personality and various versions of defence mechanisms. These ideas are available to anyone interested in any aspect of the human condition. 'Psychoanalysis', or now more broadly 'psychodynamic' or 'depth psychology', has emerged, after a brief incarceration in the consulting room, to influence the creative arts and contemporary culture. The popularisation of specialised vocabulary has confused the strict meaning of some terms.[10] Words drift in slowly from the now massive and heterogeneous professional literature (e.g. the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, or the *American Journal of Psychiatry*) and migrate in huge numbers from the pages of best-sellers about patients in treatment (e.g. Virginia Axline's *Dibs*,[11] Alice Miller's *The Drama of Being a Child*,[12] or Hannah Green's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*[13]) into common parlance. Indeed, they have become so familiar that people no longer acknowledge or even remember their source. There is also a growing, tentative affiliation between the psychodynamic models and the holistic schools of alternative medicine, meditation and Eastern spiritual disciplines. These schools, which grew independently from ancient roots, now find much in common with modern psychotherapeutic principles and their boundaries have become blurred.

Psychodynamic formulations are used by many psychotherapists. Their concepts seldom fulfil the strict criteria of scientific fact but are plastic enough to allow adaptation, modification, amendments and expansion. Some practitioners are committed to a single school, while others draw upon several or create new models in an effort to improve their understanding of the material in their fields. This 'eclectic' approach has been adopted in this thesis. Concepts which seem particularly relevant to McEwan's work have been selected from different sources, but the schools chosen are not entirely incompatible with one another.[14]. Each uses Freud's basic framework and rejects or modifies only those aspects of his theory which are not borne out by their author's experience, usually acquired in situations unfamiliar to Freud. As several authors give the same terms a slightly different meaning, it

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[10] An example of this is 'insight', commonly used to mean mental penetration. In psychiatry it describes 'the capacity to appreciate that one's disturbances of thought and feeling are subjective and invalid', while in psychoanalysis it denotes 'the capacity to understand one's own motives, to be aware of one's own psychodynamics, to appreciate the meaning of symbolic behaviour', Rycroft, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, p. 72.

[11] Virginia Axline, *Dibs* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

[12] Alice Miller, *The Drama of Being a Child and the Search for the True Self* (London: Virago, 1987).

[13] Hannah Green, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (London: Pan, 1967).

[14] Behaviour therapy and schools based on learning theory, which deny the existence of the unconscious, have little to say about creativity. Sociological models based on techniques for the improvement of self-assertion and social skills, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), and cognitive theories have not been used, because they promote a different kind of argument and offer a different view of mental life. The Gestalt school has been drawn on for one concept only - the phenomenon of closure.

has been decided to offer a brief account of the models which have been used extensively, while the eclectics have been left to speak for themselves. Clearly, any informed discussion of such a large subject is beyond the scope of this thesis, but some information seems essential, to avoid confusion.

Transactional analysis is a simplified version of the Freudian model created by Eric Berne for use in small, face-to-face groups. It substitutes the terms Parent, Adult and Child for ego states approximately equivalent to the superego, ego and id. This model is especially useful in understanding the interpersonal relationships rather than the intrapsychic problems of individual characters. The concepts of the 'internalised child', 'neurotic fit', and 'life scripts' highlight the rules behind the distortions in long-term relationships described so vividly by McEwan. A game: 'is an ongoing series of complimentary, ulterior transactions progressing to a well defined, predictable outcome. Descriptively it is a recurring set of transactions, often repetitious, superficially plausible, with a concealed motivation'.[15] Games are differentiated from procedures, rituals and pastimes by their ulterior quality and the 'pay-off'. Some people play their games in a relaxed way, others are more intense. Games are known as 'easy' and 'hard' respectively. A '3rd degree' game is one which ends in the hospital, courtroom or mortuary.

Attachment theory rests on Bowlby's study of the making and breaking of affectional bonds, supported by some findings from ethology, the process of grief in children observed by Robertson, and Brown's descriptions of bereavement in adults. It has been used to link McEwan's experience of boarding school with events in the novel *The Child in Time*. Ward and Welldon are representative of the opposition to Freud's sexist attitudes and their views chime in with McEwan's feminist convictions. Jung and others, notably Neumann, Storr and Fromm (who have been influenced by Jung's thought), have been extensively referred to in the conclusion because, unlike the other authorities mentioned, they concern themselves with existential questions and suggest resolutions of millennial problems which preoccupy McEwan in the middle phase of his writing.

The Kleinian school offers a hypothetical reconstruction of the pre-verbal phase of infantile experience based on direct observations of babies and play therapy with young children. It has contributed to the understanding of the inner world of psychotics and border-line personalities, as well as the behaviour of small and large groups. It seems particularly applicable to the bizarre personalities in McEwan's early short stories and can be used to support his stance against the Cold War and the

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[15] Eric Berne, *Games People Play: the Psychology of Human Relationships* (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1966), p. 48.

politics of the Iron Curtain. Kleinian theories hold that initially babies are unable to differentiate between the 'me' and the 'not me' and between the inside and the outside of their body. They also have no idea of the continuity of time, so that they live in an everlasting present without any memory of the past or any conception of the future. Good experience, when the baby is relaxed and comfortable, alternates with bad experience, when he is hungry and tense. Infants, therefore, move inexplicably, from their own point of view, between unconnected episodes of strong and opposite feelings, punctuated by intervals of the unconsciousness of sleep. With repeated exposure to reality, which provides an experience of the continuity and sameness of the world and the self, images are internalised and form representations in the mind which are recognised and gradually acquire meaning. There is little resemblance between the internalised objects and objective adult reality at first because of the limitations of the infant's understanding. Whole situations, whole objects and whole persons are not perceived in their entirety but as 'part-objects' which are introjected and internalised. Mother's nipple, breast, face, hands, voice and her imagined inside exist independently as images in the baby's mind. Good and bad experiences become associated with these images, so that the breast which feeds and the voice which soothes are registered as different 'objects' from the breast that withholds and the voice that scolds.

The mechanisms of introjection (the taking in wholesale of what is perceived to be 'out there') and projection (the expelling of painful unwanted 'badness' to the outside of one's self) operate from the very beginning and apply to the internalised objects, as well as to the real figures in the baby's world. An early split (or 'schism') exists between the idea of 'all-that-is-good' (which is idealised) and 'all-that-is-bad' (which is unredeemed). The Kleinian model refers to this situation as the 'paranoid-schizoid position'. The characteristic organisation in this phase is the structuring in the inner world of two places: one which is safe and good, the other threatening and evil. These places are inhabited by nurturing, comforting, protecting figures and depriving, vicious and attacking figures respectively. Anxiety experienced in the paranoid-schizoid position is described as 'paranoid anxiety' and is felt in relation to one's own safety and well being. The threat here is felt to be extreme and involves violence, robbery and murder inflicted by uncaring, persecuting figures onto a helpless victim. These anxieties contain an emotional response to one's own projected aggression, while the sense of safety depends on protection by omnipotent and omniscient figures, who are benevolently inclined.

This black and white world (the pre-depressive or paranoid-schizoid position), gradually gives

way, as a result of repeated experiences of introjection and projection, to the understanding that the mother who is loved and the one who is attacked in rage and envy are different aspects of the same person. Moreover, while the ideal mother was experienced as beyond harm, the real mother has human qualities of vulnerability. Guilt and ambivalence now arise. This realisation is termed the 'depressive position' or the 'age of concern'. Depressive anxiety is felt for the safety of the other person, who could have been hurt with one's hate, and reparation seems justified. These concepts have been adapted to small and large groups which behave, in some ways, like an individual in the grip of powerful unconscious forces.

The depressive position cannot be maintained by adults or groups under stress. In these circumstances there is regression to the paranoid-schizoid position with consequent splitting of the complex ambivalent emotional response. Thus, the situation can be responded to as if all-that-is-good, with generous additions in the service of idealisation, belonged to one's self or one's own side in a conflict, while all-that-is-bad can be projected on to the enemy to amplify the badness already there. In this way, decisions of a moral nature are simplified and the absolute, irredeemable badness of the enemy seems to justify every kind of rejection, ill-usage and even destruction, while one's own side is felt to be just, good and worthy of every kind of sacrifice in its service. Abuse of the 'bad object' does not evoke guilt, grief or remorse. There is a plethora of examples of splitting in McEwan's short stories, and the operation of this mechanism is evident in the attitudes of critics to his early work.

Erikson offers an expanded exposition of the developmental phases, supplementing his clinical findings with studies in anthropology. His model is particularly useful in exploring the themes of sado-masochism and betrayal, which recur in McEwan's fiction. It also adds significantly to the understanding of the psychological differences between the sexes.

Erikson distinguishes between two stages in the oral phase which he calls the 'early incorporative' stage and the 'late incorporative' stage. The early incorporative stage persists while the baby is helpless and his life depends on getting and receiving what he is given, or on learning to get someone to do for him what he is, as yet, unable to do for himself. This does not apply only to food but also to stimulation and emotional satisfaction. The infant is 'polymorphously perverse', in the sense that he can use any received experience which is pleasurable to attract and be invested with libido. The late incorporative stage is more active and directed towards discrimination. The toddler now has teeth and more control over eyes, ears and hands so that he can grasp and hold onto sensations and objects,

or block them and discard them, rather than passively accept them. Oral sadism expresses itself in biting, spitting or throwing away and can become a cruel need to get, and to take, in ways harmful to others:

> The pathology and irrationality of oral trends depend entirely on the degree to which they are integrated with the rest of the personality and the degree to which they fit into the general cultural pattern and use approved interpersonal techniques for their expression...the *firm establishment of enduring patterns for the balance of basic trust over basic mistrust* is the first task of the budding personality. [16]

Erikson defines the nuclear conflict of the oral phase as that of trust versus mistrust. 'Basic trust' is an attitude towards one's self and the world in which the self can be trusted to sustain life and to hold onto a sense of continuity and integrity, while the world is felt to be a place where one's basic needs are met. Absence of basic trust is the result of a failure to establish mutuality in the first relationship, and leads to a paranoid attitude. Erikson describes four basic modes of relating to the world: the incorporative mode; the eliminative mode; the retentive mode; and the intrusive mode. These are present from the beginning but find full expression at different phases of development. The incorporative mode is predominant in the early oral phase, while the three others are rudimentary and auxiliary. The satisfactions of the oral phase, and the mode of incorporation, can later be used to approach other tasks, notably the growth of the intellect and the development of discrimination in other spheres.

The achievements of the oral phase are greatly added to in the anal phase. The 'me' becomes 'I', and the 'not me' is recognised as mother and significant others. This separation brings with it the need to assert the self, since 'yes' means no more than passive compliance until the individual can say 'no'. Exercise of personal choice becomes an issue in the anal phase and is marked by negativism (persistent practice in saying no), stubbornness and outbursts of anger (temper tantrums) against the self for failures in competence or in response to opposition from the environment. Control of the sphincters is only part of the general drive for control of the whole musculature. Sensory-motor co-ordination (poor in the oral phase) improves, so that sitting and walking become increasingly automatic, and the toddler is free to concentrate on the goals of these whole body movements; the manipulation of objects with the hands, or control of other people by expressions of strong feeling.

The anal phase is complex, because here the mode of incorporation is maintained, while the two modes of retention and elimination must be developed from their original subsidiary positions into

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[16] E. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1980), p. 63/4.

the main modes of approach to the world. These two modes have to be alternated in response to stimuli so that appropriate reactions can be chosen. The musculature as a whole, not only the sphincters, must integrate the two activities - relaxing and contracting - to produce extension and flexion. Control is the main achievement of the anal phase: control of large and small movements, control of the bowel and bladder, and control of the violent emotions that accompany the emerging sense of will and autonomy. If self-control is frustrated and autonomy opposed, the toddler will concentrate on perverting the impulse of control to stubborn control of others in the environment. As this is one of the main factors promoting the obsessional neurosis, and also one of the chief effects of the methods of child-rearing in Western Civilisations, this issue is crucial to the understanding of McEwan's characters.

Erikson believes that the second important nuclear conflict, resolved in the anal phase, is that of autonomy versus shame[17] and doubt. Power is an anal phase issue in that self-control, or the ability to control others and the environment, boost confidence and self esteem. People who feel small tend to compensate by seeking to exercise power in all its forms. Repression is an important mechanism in this phase, sometimes in the sense of repressing the freedom of others, as well as in the free expression of one's own emotions. Secrecy, with the consequent problems of betrayal and hypocrisy, is a strategy aimed at avoiding shame and hiding one's failures from the eyes of others. Dominance and submission are related to power. The organising of status hierarchies, with power invested in dominant individuals who rule by rigid rules or by the habit of bullying and humiliating social inferiors, has its roots in the anal phase. The gains of self-esteem and autonomy from the anal phase are integrated into the personality with the basic trust established in the oral phase. The next phase, the genital phase, follows. The similarities and differences in emotional development between males and females are of crucial importance, not only in personal relationships, but also in social and political arenas. Since McEwan focuses some of his stories on this problem, this phase will be dealt with in depth.

In the genital phase there is a noticeable shift of libido to the genital organs and an increase of interest in sexual and reproductive matters. Naive attempts at masturbation, imitative sexual acts, and games offering an opportunity to practice future family roles are important here. Boys and girls, who have experienced a parallel development up to this point, continue to use the incorporative, retentive and eliminative modes but the fourth mode, the 'intrusive mode' (auxiliary until this phase), now becomes predominant. The phallic orientation of both sexes promotes fantasies about: 'the intrusion

[17] Shame, according to Erikson, is very different from guilt, and arises when one feels exposed to the eyes of others as small, inadequate and wanting in control, while guilt operates at all times (especially when one is alone) and is a matter of punishment by the superego for sins in thought, word and deed (especially the Oedipus complex).

into other bodies by physical attack; the intrusion into other people's ears and minds by aggressive talking; the intrusion into space by vigorous locomotion; the intrusion into the unknown by consuming curiosity'.[18]

Boys tend to attach their phallic fantasies to the penis, while girls develop basic modes of 'feminine inception' and 'maternal inclusion'. Culture and tradition are important here and the exploitation of the female, in terms of her role as child bearer and carer for dependants, can be emphasised by discouraging phallic strivings and encouraging regressive tendencies. This has the aim of directing the libido towards 'getting' passively once more and, later, 'getting to be a giver' of care for the dependency needs of others. This closeness of the girls' genital modes of inception and inclusion to the oral mode of incorporation account, according to Erikson, for the general exploitability of women. The genital phase is characterised in boys by: 'head-on attack, enjoyment of competition, insistence on goal, pleasure of conquest'.[19] The emphasis on 'making' in the phallic intrusive mode remains with boys throughout life and is sublimated into educational, sporting and work activities. In girls the phallic emphasis gradually gives way in some areas, especially sexual behaviour, to: 'making by teasing and provoking or by milder forms of 'snaring' - i.e., by making herself attractive and endearing'.[20]

The third nuclear conflict is that of 'initiative versus guilt'. Guilt is vague but pervasive and stems from repressed Oedipal strivings and fantasies about the breaking of the incest taboo. The mechanism of 'isolation' operates here, which accomplishes the severance of a feeling from an idea, a memory or a fantasy. As no association can be made, the feeling is left without any apparent cause. The genital phase has within it: 'a rudimentary generative mode, representing the dim anticipation of the fact that genitality has a procreative function'[21] and pre-forms the future functions of insemination and parturition. The intrusive, inceptive and inclusive modes become integrated with the retentive and eliminative modes of the anal phase and the incorporative mode of the oral phase. The vicissitudes of the instincts, which lose their way in the process of integration, are responsible for neurosis and 'acting out' illustrated in such profusion in McEwan's short stories.

McEwan embraces many psychodynamic concepts which he discovered through his ex-wife Penny and her guru Bob Moore. This is made clear in 'Me and My Psyche':

> Bob Moore speaks more sensibly about [dreams] than anyone I have come across, and certainly more sensibly than Freud. For Moore, dreams are not a set of crude

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[18] Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, p. 80.
[19] E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 84.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 85

equations of this meaning that.[22]

Noel Hess[23] accuses McEwan of displaying: 'remarkable ignorance of modern psychoanalytic thinking by dismissing Freudian dream interpretation as merely "this equals that"'.[24] In fact, Freudian analysts hold that dreams are: '*overdetermined*, being the final common path of many forces, whether constitutional, developmental or environmental'.[25] McEwan believes that: 'In our medicine we describe the human personality as a static structure (superego, ego, id)' (*OSWD*, p. 11). There is nothing static about Freud's model. The three components of the personality[26] are conceived of as working in a dynamic equilibrium. Freud's famous dictum: 'where id was, ego shall be', implies that with maturity, the id impulses should become increasingly conscious and integrated with the whole personality. The superego should also become less dependent on tradition and come to represent one's own code of behaviour, freely chosen, by rational principles of what is just, right and proper.

In spite of a remarkable fit between his writing and psychodynamic theory, McEwan makes it clear that he does not base his work on psychological formulations and then create a 'narrative shelter'[27] to illustrate them. Indeed, much of the interest of this work would be lost if he had done so:

> The novels which are most fruitful for the psychologist are those in which the author has not already given a psychological interpretation of his characters, and which therefore leave room for analysis and explanation, or even invite it by their mode of presentation. (*MM*, p. 178)

Contrived plots intended to portray the unconscious motives of characters must, of necessity, start in the conscious mind of the author. In McEwan's early writing, unconscious contents simply erupt into the text, often surprising the author and shocking the reader: 'even with the most rigorous of schemes...the best writing, the real discoveries and almost certainly the greatest pleasures will come from precisely what is unplanned. To be surprised in the act of creation!' (*MA*, p. IX). This seems to agree closely with Jung's belief:

> An exciting narrative that is apparently quite devoid of psychological exposition is just what interests the psychologist most of all. Such a tale is built upon a ground-work of implicit psychological assumptions and, in the measure that the author is unconscious of them, they reveal themselves, pure and unalloyed, to the critical discernment. (*MM*, p. 178)

Furthermore:

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[22] Ian McEwan, 'Me and My Psyche', *Weekend Guardian* (20 - 21 May 1989), p. 20.
[23] Noel Hess is the Principal Clinical Psychologist, University College Hospital, London.
[24] Noel Hess, 'An Alternative Debt That is Really Owed to Freud', *The Guardian* (26 May 1989), p. 26.
[25] J.A.C. Brown, *Freud and the Post-Freudians* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 4.
[26] Freud believes that love grows gradually in the soul of man through well defined stages. This, according to Bettelheim in *Freud and Man's Soul* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), is a more accurate rendering of the mistranslation that led to the misunderstanding that Freud believed all human relationships could be reduced to sex. Freud postulates a basic structure of the psyche with the following components: the libido, a life force or initially undifferentiated energy which is innate, the unconscious (id); consciousness, which develops in response to the experience of reality, rudimentary in infancy but growing with time (ego); the internalised representations of standards and expectations, first established by parental limits and controls and later projected onto rules of conduct and laws in society, which form the conscience (superego).
[27] This concept is used by McEwan in an interview with Dwight Garner for *Salon* in *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Salon* (http://www.salonmagazine.com/books/int/1998/03/cov si 3/nt.html).

> It makes no difference whether the poet knows that his work is begotten, grows and matures with him, or whether he supposes that by taking thought he produces it out of the void....The creative process has feminine quality and the creative work arises from unconscious depths... (*MM*, p. 197)

It is possible to be completely unaware of, or uninterested in, the life and personality of an author, subjecting only his published work to interpretation. This approach was forced on readers and critics before 1982 because, till then, McEwan presented an opaque front and only the minimum of information could be discovered about him. Since then various personal facts have gradually emerged in prefaces, introductions, newspaper articles and interviews in the press, radio and television published sporadically over the last sixteen years. Two books have been written about him, by Kiernan Ryan and Jack Slay Jr., and there are sections about him in books on contemporary authors, notably *Novelists in Interview* by John Haffenden, *Venus Envy* by Adam Mars-Jones and *A Vain Conceit* by D. J. Taylor. These contain some information about his life, as well as comments on, and interpretations of his work. There are sizeable entries under his name in *Contemporary Novelists*,[28] *Dictionary of Literary Biography*,[29] *The Novel Today*,[30] *Contemporary Writers*[31] and *Contemporary Authors*.[32]

Some facts about his background and personal experiences have been collected from these sources and used in this thesis to construct a frame of reference into which his fiction can be fitted in chronological order, so as to point out the parallels between developments in his life and his work - what McEwan himself has called the 'metaplot'[33] or 'the wider story of the writer's developing output...the things [an author] does...which have a bearing on his fiction'.[34] As Jung says:

> Every creative person is a duality or a synthesis of contradictory aptitudes. On the one side he is a human being with a personal life, while on the other side he is an impersonal, creative process. Since as a human being he may be sound or morbid, we must look at his psychic make-up to find the determinants for his personality. But we can only understand him in his capacity of artist by looking at his creative achievement. (*MM*, p. 195)

This thesis is not intended to amount to an analysis of McEwan the man. It seeks simply to trace the connections between his work and his life. Early in his career he developed a method of constructing fiction which has served him well for over twenty years and can be applied an infinite number of times. According to Alan Franks, it consists of:

> barely reworked snatches of his own life [which] sit side by side with outlandish, explicit

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[28] P. Lewis, 'McEwan, Ian (Russell)' in L. Henderson (ed.), *Contemporary Novelists* (Chicago and London: St James Press, 1991), pp. 621 -3.
[29] John Fletcher, *Dictionary of Literary Biography 14: British Novelists Since 1960, part 2: H - Z* (Detroit: Gale, 1983), pp. 495 - 500.
[30] Allan Massie, *The Novel Today: A Critical Guide to the British Novel 1970 - 1989* (London: Longman, 1990), pp. 49 - 52.
[31] Damian Grant, *Contemporary Writers: Ian McEwan* (London: Book Trust and British Council, 1989).
[32] Joan E. Marecki, 'McEwan, Ian (Russell) 1948-', *Contemporary Authors: New Revision Series*, vol. 14 (Detroit: Gale, 1985), pp. 312 - 13.
[33] The prefix 'meta' denotes sharing or joint action. The metaplot can thus be regarded as the parallel development in the author's personality and his work.
[34] Alan Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', *The Times* (27 June 1992), p. 4.

> abuse and brutality in what can be seen as parables on the evil of power in all its theatres: sex, family, society, politics, authority and the rest.[35]

This formula can be used when analysing any example of McEwan's prose. He himself draws attention to accounts of current events in the media ranging from a story about children who buried their mother in a cellar (*The Cement Garden*) to the collapse of the Berlin Wall (*Black Dogs*). He often quotes his sources - for instance the state secrets surrounding Operation Gold in *The Innocent* or the impressive list of references to learned papers in *Enduring Love*. This helps to establish the background of objective reality on which his fiction rests. In his reminiscences he offers personal memories, from working on an eel farm in 'First Love, Last Rites', to a meeting with two black dogs on a walk in the Languedoc. Having once found a form of words which satisfies him, McEwan tends to use it again and again in writing and speaking about both himself and his characters so that it is easy to establish a link between them.

This conscious material is very carefully worked on. The final version has the complexity of plot, the vividness of detail, the suspense and dramatic shocks, which, together with his almost pedantic attention to language, have all become the hallmark of his style. This skill is enough for a good writer, but McEwan promises and often delivers something more. The material described thus far is tightly sandwiched between the search for spiritual and moral values and the dark elements from the personal and collective unconscious, which give his work the double appeal of superego and id satisfactions. In his later books, the ego (reality) themes serve as a narrative shelter for the discussion of high-minded individual and public concerns and as a safe pathway for the discharge of tensions from the repressed material in the author's, and often the reader's, unconscious. This thesis aims to isolate the superego, ego, and id elements in McEwan's writing, and trace the gradual or sudden shifts between these three levels, which will be shown to continue throughout the fabric of his fiction.

The unconscious themes, which surface gradually and piecemeal through his characters, fall easily into two categories. The first is made up of strong feelings associated with the Oedipus complex, difficulties with masculine self-identification and problems with the reality of the body and its physiological functions; the second consists of feelings of rejection, unresolved grief, struggles against the wish to regress to a paradisal childhood and the problems of sexual functioning contaminated with power issues. As William Leith remarks: 'The repulsive spectacle of the anti-hero squirming out of his straightjacket of repression is always strangely compelling'.[36] It seems reasonable to search for the

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[35] *Ibid.*

[36] William Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', *Sunday Times* (6 May 1990), p. 9.

roots of McEwan's fantasies in his early life.

He was born in Aldershot on 21 June 1948. Both his parents came from Glasgow. His father joined the Regular Army to avoid unemployment, eventually rising to the rank of Sergeant-Major. The family travelled abroad with him to various postings in Germany, Singapore and North Africa and lived in Army accommodation. He often refers to himself as 'a sort of only child' (*NI*, p. 171): 'After I was born, my mother was not able to have any more children'.[37] He recalls: 'characteristically, for one of the happiest moments of my childhood, I was alone'.[38] His memories of happiness in this period may account for the wish to return to this stage, which recurs in his fiction. Anthony Storr holds that the 'imaginative capacity tends to become particularly highly developed in gifted individuals who, for one reason or another, have passed rather solitary childhoods'.[39] Winnicott writes at length about the value of the capacity to be alone in adult life. He believes that this comes from repeated experiences of being 'alone in the presence of mother'[40] and contrasts this peaceful closeness with impingement. Toddlers and young children play alone or in parallel with others when they are together. Interruptions to solitary play, which is enriched by a vivid fantasy life, can be experienced as impingement, while competition for the mother's attention and demands for compliance from figures in authority can lead to loss of the sense of self and may produce symptoms of depersonalisation and alienation in later life.[41] Bowlby also regards the presence of a calm and easily accessible but non-impinging adult, who acts as a 'security base'[42] allowing for safe attachment, as essential for establishing a sense of being loved and comfortably contained. McEwan seems to be recalling such experiences: 'I remember playing with my parents much as I played with other children. We played separately rather than all three together. Out-doors was my father's domain, indoors my mother's'.[43] The wish to engage in mutual or group games develops later and McEwan also enjoyed the company of others: 'I had a lot of good friends [in North Africa]. It was a rather idyllic time'.[44] About his family relationships he writes:

> The only child stands at the apex of a tight little triangle...- whatever is on offer, the only child gets it all...Our triangle, at least the sides of it that I could see, was constructed of uncomplicated affection.[45]

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[37] Ian McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', *The Observer* (31 Jan. 1982), p. 41.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] Anthony Storr, *Solitude* (London: Flamingo, 1989), p. 106.
[40] D. Winnicott discusses this concept in 'The Capacity to be Alone' in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: Hogarth, 1965).
[41] D. Winnicott discusses this concept in 'Ego Distortion in Terms of the True and False Self' in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment.*
[42] John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, vol. 3 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), pp. 38 - 43.
[43] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[44] William Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', *The Observer*, (20 Sept. 1998), p. 8.
[45] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.

In other accounts McEwan stresses the bliss of the times spent alone with his mother and the unpleasant shocks occasioned by his father's visits on leave. In spite of this, he always claimed that he loved and respected his father, although he used to be afraid of him:

> McEwan has a nice, human respect for his father; he's more generous, more gentle, in talking about his family than one would expect from the creator of such grossly dysfunctional fictional families: 'He was a very loving father, rather overwhelming, quite domineering, but very loving...not a man for psychological subtlety, but a man of great kindness; a man with a very good heart'.[46]

In 1989 he described his memories of his father's reappearances as an interruption of his first love affair.[47]

The first group of preoccupations of McEwan's characters seems to arise from the pre-pubertal phases and is largely made up of remnants of the Oedipus complex, with faint echoes of oral and anal phase conflicts. When he spoke to Ian Hamilton about *The Cement Garden*, he said:

> I had an idea that in the nuclear family the kind of forces that are being suppressed - the oedipal, incestuous forces - are also paradoxically the very forces which keep the family together. So if you remove the controls, you have a ripe anarchy in which the oedipal and the incestuous are the definitive emotions.[48]

An important axiom in psychodynamic theory is that there is no time or change in the unconscious. In this sense, the theory forms a bridge back to the remote past and forward to the future. The Oedipus complex is timeless and we can find it in the plays of Sophocles and Shakespeare as well as in McEwan's fiction. The term describes the emotional problems of boys between four and five years of age (the phallic phase) who live in a family. At this time the boy is emerging from total dependence on the mother, who was initially experienced as part of the self and later as his exclusive and undisputed property, into an awareness of his own growing separateness and independence. At the same time the differences between the sexes, not only in the body but in role and status together with the significance of the father, force themselves on his attention. The ego, concerned as it is with reality and common sense, operates at this age with simplistic ideas and limited information with which to comprehend the world. The picture is, of necessity, distorted and incomplete, and needs to be revised, amended and updated with each new insight to remain as accurate as possible. This creative activity is conscious. Only when experiences or information prove very complicated or fraught with emotional conflicts, does the mechanism of repression come to the aid of the boy. By removing the complex from consciousness, it sets the mind free to deal with more manageable concerns.

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[46] Natasha Walter, 'Looks Like a Teacher. Writes Like a Demon', *The Observer* (24 Aug. 1997), p. 2.
[47] Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', p. 8.
[48] Ian Hamilton, 'Points of Departure', *New Review*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1978), p. 21.

The Oedipus complex is made up of a desire for exclusive possession of the mother, anger with the father for usurping the boy's privileged place in her affections and a wish to get rid of him in order to regain sole possession of her. It can not be resolved in consciousness, because it is not possible to reconcile violent hostile feelings towards the father with love and attachment to his person. The disproportion between the size and power of man and boy make successful rivalry unrealistic. It is not possible to live the theme out in reality and dangerous to express it openly for fear of the father's retribution or damage to the family unit. The concept of death does not exist before the age of seven, so that the wish to get rid of the father is equivalent to killing him.[49] As no sense can be made of this situation, the whole complex becomes repressed and remains unaltered in the unconscious, throughout the latency period.

Latency refers to the time between five and the beginning of adolescence when boys and girls seem to lose interest in sexual concerns and turn to energetic games and studies. They have grasped the inappropriateness of speaking openly of sexual matters or masturbating in public, so there is a superficial appearance of moratorium on sexuality. The subject is now reserved for private talks with special friends and small same sex peer-groups. Some avoidance and contempt for the opposite sex is affected and peer-group solidarity is valued.

The latency period is followed by adolescence, which classically progresses through the homosexual to the heterosexual phase. In adolescence, when the body and mind have matured and are ready to embark on sexual activity, some elements of the Oedipus complex surface into consciousness piecemeal. These are no longer recognisably connected to the actual parents, who have changed in time and no longer resemble the youthful lovers banished into the unconscious in the phallic phase. Repression is seldom complete and some elements return into consciousness in dreams and fantasies, while fairy stories and children's literature depicting variations of the hero myth suggest some solutions to the Oedipal dilemma.[50] These, however, may be too deeply disguised to be available to help with integration into the growing map of consciousness. If repression continues beyond adolescence, energies still tied up in the family do not become accessible to the individual for investment in new relationships or sexual fulfilment. A more beneficial return of repressed material[51] can be achieved by

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[49] This is discussed by S. Anthony in *The Discovery of Death in Childhood and After* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

[50] This is discussed, at length, by Bruno Bettelheim in *The Uses of Enchantment: the Meaning and Importance of Fairytales* (Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1978).

[51] The return of repressed material is the process of the surfacing of unconscious material into consciousness, accompanied by vague but disquieting anxiety, which is replaced by a sense of relief once the material has been recognised and accepted. This concept is described in detail by Melanie Klein.

a dramatisation of the theme in art, prompting catharsis and allowing the detoxified elements to enter consciousness from the outside. They can then be accepted without fear or guilt, since it is the characters, and ultimately the author, who is responsible for their exposition. As Paul Mathur has said: 'the craft of fiction being what it is, the artist is inevitably expected to wear his art like a cankerously unpleasant skin.'[52]

The second group of McEwan's characters' preoccupations seems rooted in later experiences, appears to have undergone a less complete repression and may be connected with McEwan's experience of boarding school and adolescence. His father's career necessitated frequent changes of domicile and McEwan attended seven schools before he was eleven, so that the decision to send him to boarding school in England was understandable. His boarding school was Woolverstone Hall: 'The school was state-run. The pupils were..."mostly working-class kids who'd passed their 11+ and came from broken homes"'.[53] This sudden change of his total environment proved to have a catastrophic and lasting effect:

> My secure domestic triangle and the freedom of the Mediterranean were replaced by a bewildering lack of privacy, by a non-stop jostling, pummelling and shouting, by obscene words and rites which one dared not ignore, by a terrifying bully of a games master and by mediocre food.[54]

Used to daydreaming, solitary reading and his privileged position at the centre of adult attention, McEwan sustained a severe shock: 'One week I was an only child, the next I had 60 brothers'.[55] Storr writes at length about this poorly recognised trauma: 'Many middle-class English children, who had experienced total security in early childhood have had their expectations rudely shattered when sent to boarding school'.[56] This may have been the prototype of 'the shock' which McEwan repeatedly projected into the world at large through his early stories, subjecting his readers and critics to shocks which many recall years later: 'McEwan's earlier writing is characterised by a literature of shock, a conscious desire to repel and to discomfort the reader' (*Slay*, p. IX). McEwan finally admitted: 'I was accused of writing to shock and I used to deny it strenuously but looking back I guess it was true. I don't think it was a conscious desire. It wasn't calculated'.[57] These two strands of negative experience (the grief for home and the 'sexual hell' of school) may have become the 'terrible secret' which figures large in his early fiction. Jung believed that:

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[52] Paul Mathur, 'Nice Not Nasty', *Blitz* (1987), p. 43.
[53] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 8.
[54] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] Storr, *Solitude*, p. 19.
[57] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 8.

> However beneficial a secret shared with several persons may be, a merely private secret has a destructive effect....Yet if we are conscious of what we conceal, the harm done is decidedly less than if we do not know...that we have repressions at all. (*MM*, p. 36)

McEwan told William Leith that in his family 'you didn't speak up and you didn't speak your mind'.[58] Unacceptable feelings may have been suppressed together with the day-to-day traumas of boarding school life:

> He slept in a dormitory with thirty other boys. 'The amount of pastoral care was zero.... One matron. It was hell. Sexual hell...it's non-stop, for years, there's always somebody behind you, about to drop-kick you or pummel you, so that there's never any space. Not a moment to yourself'.[59]

There seems little doubt that he became withdrawn and miserable: 'I remember feeling constantly hungry. I guess I was mildly depressed for much of my adolescence'.[60] He remained troubled as an undergraduate: 'Then came three unhappy years at Sussex University, spent studying rather than socialising. "It was absurdly snobbish. I was very aware of being a lower-middle class kid"'.[61] Once he began writing, this activity took on a compulsive quality. The writer and academic Malcolm Bradbury, who taught McEwan in 1970, remembers that: 'Ian was shocking...[but] it wasn't gratuitous sensationalism. He was working out something at a deeper level....You can see a curve of maturity in McEwan's work....He needed to write through the dramas of adolescence in order to become a mature writer'.[62] The healing effect of creative writing is stressed by Storr:

> the creative process can be a way of protecting the individual against being overwhelmed by depression; a means of regaining a sense of mastery...[and] a way of repairing the self damaged by bereavement or by the loss of confidence in human relationships...[63]

It was not until *The Child in Time*, the novel which contains much autobiographical material from his childhood and adolescence, that McEwan finally came to grips with the complex[64] of grief and sexuality which marred his adolescence and youth.

His early work provides a conspicuous example of the 'literary nasty' which Cosmo Landesman describes as: 'a hybrid of sensationalised horror and highbrow seriousness; it sets out to shock and sicken, yet at the same time satirise and sermonise on the human condition'.[65] The dramatic impact of this early writing depends on sudden, unexpected revelations of unconscious material in apparently

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[58] *Ibid.*
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] Jason Cowley, 'The Prince of Darkest Imaginings', *The Times* (6 Sept. 1997), p. 9.
[61] Phil Daoust, 'Post-Shock Traumatic: Profile of Ian McEwan', *The Guardian* (4 Aug. 1997), p. 6.
[62] *Ibid.*
[63] Storr, *Solitude*, p. 143.
[64] A complex is a term coined by Jung to describe an interconnected group of conscious and unconscious ideas and feelings which affect behaviour. When the conscious and the unconscious components are separated by the repression of either, there can be thoughts about emotive issues, without the appropriate feeling e.g. fear or anger, or strong emotions without any apparent cause.
[65] Cosmo Landesman, 'Sick and Tired of All That Gore', *The Sunday Times* (26 Sept. 1993), p. 19.

innocuous settings. The characters seem totally unaware of their own motives and the author offers no explanations. The readers are left to make what they can of undisguised, primitive emotions and incomprehensible events caused by the violent and sexually perverted behaviour of characters, who in other ways seem unremarkable. This produces a feeling that ordinary people can not be trusted to behave in predictable ways and, furthermore, that anyone may at any moment and without warning do something bizarre, disgusting or criminal. Disturbing though this thought may be, it is independently supported by psychoanalytic theory and it is therefore unfair to dismiss McEwan's work as wilfully sensational. When Jung was taxed with the charge that his teaching about 'the assimilation of the unconscious...would undermine culture and exalt primitivity at the cost of our highest values', he argued that such a view arose from 'fear of nature and of life as it actually is', believing that the unconscious 'is completely neutral' as far as 'moral sense, aesthetic taste and intellectual judgement go'. It is dangerous only 'when our conscious attitude to it is hopelessly wrong.'[66]

It can be argued that McEwan's fiction is deliberately invited out of the depth of the unconscious by the practised skill of meditation, free association, and active imagination,[67] sometimes aided by the use of hallucinogenic drugs, which loosen the control of the censor. He says of himself: 'Through meditation...I was able to come into contact with aspects of my childhood and adolescence I could never have reached through rational thought'.[68] McEwan admits to having taken drugs on his trip to India: 'Twenty years ago I leapfrogged into a different level of consciousness through Mescaline. I had a glimpse of what mystics mean when they talk about a sense of oneness'.[69] Indeed, in the sixties, before the dangers were known, psychotherapists occasionally used drugs as an adjunct or short cut to the laborious analysis of dreams. It is easy to recognise in McEwan's description of his method, the surfacing of unconscious images: 'This could be the tenth time in a week that these pieces have jostled before you...The fragments belong, but you do not yet know how' (*MA*, p. VIII). The effort to contain them in a framework is conscious: 'beyond the pieces, is the prospect of making a shape, a form that is self-sustaining, self-justifying and balanced' (*MA*, p. IX). McEwan's practised ease in dissociating his superego and loosening the connections between thoughts, feelings and actions frees fantasies previously inaccessible to his imagination and seldom visited in the private fantasies of readers who

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[66] C. Jung, *Psychological Reflections* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 27.
[67] Active imagination 'is a state of reverie in which judgement is suspended but consciousness is preserved. The subject is required to note what fantasies occur to him and then to let these fantasies pursue their own path without conscious intervention. In this way, [he] may be able to rediscover hidden parts of himself as well as portray the psychological journey on which he is embarking', Storr, *Solitude*, p. 194.
[68] McEwan, 'Me and My Psyche', p. 20.
[69] *Ibid.*

subject their own imagination to strict control. The mythopoetic process[70] combines elements from the inner life with elements of objective reality and creates each time a new story. Escapist literature makes no use of this process, accepting the conventional definitions of the opposites and making no attempt at a synthesis that might evoke ambivalence. Instead, it offers the reader an idealised or hypothetical realm, which he can visit for a temporary respite from stress or boredom in his daily life, but which contributes nothing new to his understanding of himself or the world.

The mythopoetic process is central to the understanding of art and literature through the Jungian model, which stresses the polarity of the opposites and the mind's attempts to reconcile them into a meaningful whole.[71] Modern man is 'fascinated by the almost pathological manifestations of the unconscious mind' (*MM*, p. 238). McEwan came across Jung's ideas on his trip to India and may have shared them with his ex-wife[72] and Bob Moore.[73] The idea of opposites in union is expressed in the archetype of the Self,[74] represented in alchemy and mythology by the hermaphrodite, and the gods (and mortals), in heterosexual copulation. It symbolises the dynamic fusion of opposites, which produces something new, something more than a compromise, or a mixture of both, but containing elements of each in a stable relationship. Symbols arising from the collective unconscious evoke powerful primitive feelings and urges towards instinctive behaviour in individuals at transitional stages in their development (birth, adolescence, mating, parenthood, ageing and death). They also synchronise behaviour of large groups of unrelated individuals when their community is under severe stress or in crisis. The archetypes are said by Jung to be innate, to predate the development of consciousness and to be the psychological counterpart of heritable instincts.

The equilibrium between conscious and unconscious material available for synthesis, may shift from time to time. It is found at one extreme in McEwan's early stories, which contain dark images from the unconscious, supported by a bare skeleton of reality. They deal with sex and death through protagonists who use masturbation, child abuse, rape and murder to express Eros and Thanatos.[75]

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[70] Mythopoetic Process is the term used by the Jungian School of Analytical Psychology to denote the synthesis of conscious and unconscious material into a story.

[71] All the archetypes are bipolar with a positive and a negative pole. These are like the opposite sides of the same coin, so that when one is active, the other is inaccessible, for example, the Great Mother as the witch or fairy godmother, who appears as two opposite figures in dreams and fantasies. This is discussed, at length, by C. Jung in 'The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious' in *Collected Works*, vol. 9.1 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959).

[72] Penny Allen has included *Man and His Symbols*, *Aspects of the Feminine* and *Psychology and Alchemy* by Jung in her list of suggested further reading for readers of her book *The Face of the Deep* (Berks.: Capall Bann Publishing, 1998).

[73] Bob Moore runs residential courses in Denmark (which include meditation and other spiritual teachings) which McEwan attended with Penny Allen.

[74] The Jungian school have contributed the concept of the archetype to the pool of modern ideas, in the same way that the Freudian school have contributed the Oedipus complex. While the latter is understood to be the result of repression of individual experience into the personal unconscious, the former is believed to function as an autonomous complex with its roots much deeper, in the collective (or universal) unconscious.

[75] Freud postulated two main drives - Eros (love, often interpreted as sex) and Thanatos (the death instinct).

Psychodynamic models explain the revulsion experienced by people brought face to face with psychotic ideas as the natural rejection of material which has evaded the censor. Memories of experiences in infancy, or images from the pre-verbal phase of mental development, disturb normal functioning and lead to gross psychopathology when they are uncensored, uncontrolled and too bizarre to be integrated into the existing framework of reality. Psychotics, young children and artists have much in common, but each deals differently with material from the unconscious. In psychosis this is experienced as hallucinations, delusions and distortions of the perception of reality which are accepted as genuine and acted upon. Psychotherapies which are aimed at treatment interpret these manifestations so that they can be recognised for what they are and subjected to the test of reality.[76] Children gradually grow through a series of recognised developmental phases as they mature.[77] Artists render unconscious material innocuous, by expressing it in painting or fiction and thus distance it from themselves and sublimate it. Jung writes: 'The way of successive assimilations...leads in the end to...the bringing into reality of the whole human being - that is, individuation' (*MM*, p. 31). When discussing his early work, McEwan makes regular use of evasion and intellectualisation. He claims, that his motive for writing 'Last Day of Summer' was 'a wish to write a story in the present tense' (*NI*, p. 169). In fourteen pages, he describes death by drowning, the heart-rending plight of an unwanted baby, an unattractive girl who willingly accepts a thankless, denigrated female role and unresolved grief for parents. McEwan sidesteps any exploration of these painful subjects in early interviews by concentrating on discussion of literary style. Of 'First Love, Last Rites' he says: 'I...had a simple - silly desire to end a story with the word yes' (*NI*, p. 172). When pressed for the roots of his macabre fantasies by *Vogue*, in his first ever interview, McEwan was so unable to explain himself that the interview was never published. Even ten years later he 'didn't know the answers' and could 'only murmur of his early fictional interest in depravity that "your subject matter chooses you really"'.[78] Paul Mathur reports that: 'McEwan can't read his own books but expects that at the age of 70, when he's got thirty of them behind him, he might be able to browse through one of the early ones'.[79] This aversion is not unlike the way people forget their nightmares on awakening. Nor has he encouraged his sons, now adolescent, to read his books, with the exception of *The Daydreamer*.[80] As late as 1998, McEwan was still insisting that what he

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[76] This is the basic aim of all exploratory techniques in psychotherapy.

[77] Understanding of the developmental phases is vital to the psychodynamic interpretation of McEwan's work. The phases of psychosexual development are labelled as follows: oral phase (birth - 18 months); anal phase (18 months - 3 to 4 years); genital phase - usually called the phallic phase in boys (3 - 5 years); latency period (5 - 12 years); adolescence (12+); adulthood (18 - 30); middle life (30 - 50) and involution (50+). The stages merge one into another and the ages offered here are approximations.

[78] Anon, 'Master of the Short, Sharp Shock', *The Independent*, (5 Sept. 1987), p. 32.

[79] Mathur, 'Nice Not Nasty', p. 46.

[80] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 8.

knew about psychology he had 'learned like everybody else: by making mistakes.'[81] However, he uses the language of psychology in *Enduring Love* more extensively than in any other work.

The defence mechanisms of distancing and intellectualisation are even more clearly visible in McEwan's reactions to his early critics. Again and again he describes how surprised and hurt he was by words like 'dirty', 'macabre', 'untransmittable' and 'dark and nasty'. He felt 'Solid Geometry' was 'playful' (*NI*, p. 169). He disclaims any gratuitous pleasure in describing sexual perversions and violence and resorts to a rather pompous claim to elitism:

> I had thought that obscenity was intellectually OK; I had the feeling that in a century that had produced Burroughs, Joyce, Lawrence etc. that nobody would give it any thought. I did not know what they were getting so worked up about, and I remain deeply sceptical about the shock.[82]

By 1987 he decided not to 'deal any more in the visceral subject matter of those days'.[83] Eventually he was able to give vent to straightforward anger: 'I hate it [my reputation]. Absolutely hate it...Most of all I cannot bear being denied the benefit of the doubt in my imagination'.[84] However, as Adam Mars-Jones makes clear, 'It's not the case that a persona is a self-portrait unless the author testifies to the contrary, but nor are the ingredients for its making gathered on the Mountains of the Moon'.[85] Jung is even more emphatic: 'It is undeniable that the poet's psychic disposition permeates his work root and branch. Nor is there anything new in the statement that personal factors largely influence the poet's choice and use of his materials' (*MM*, p. 193).

The most significant aspect of McEwan's early fiction, from the psychodynamic point of view, is the wide gap and acute tension between the conscious and unconscious material as well as the sharp difference between his persona and the personalities described in his work. It is hard to believe that the same man wrote the following two passages, within a few years of each other:

> One can only speculate about a world-view that would be entirely consonant with the discoveries of the scientific revolution of this century. It hardly seems possible that what is now orthodox in science should continue for ever to be so much at odds with what we now hold to be common sense. (*OSWD*, p. 13)

and: 'I felt proud, proud to be fucking, even if it were only Connie, my ten-year-old sister...proud in advance of being able to say "I have fucked"' (*FLLR*, p. 39).

The short stories are followed by *The Cement Garden* and *The Comfort of Strangers*. In these novellas McEwan includes more detailed descriptions of settings and situations. The interpersonal

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[81] Anon, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: BoldType* (http://www.bookwire.com/boldtype/imcewan/read.article).
[82] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.
[83] John Walsh, 'Mr Nasty Turns into Mr Nice', *The Standard* (10 Sept. 1987), p. 33.
[84] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.
[85] Adam Mars-Jones, *Venus Envy*, 'Chatto Counterblasts', no. 14 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990), p. 19.

dimension is more elaborate, with older and more sophisticated characters enmeshed in long-term relationships and embedded in a social matrix of small face-to-face groups. Even so, he became dissatisfied with this medium and felt the need to write a 'less claustrophobic novel' (*NI*, p. 173). In an effort to achieve this he decided to move the equilibrium of his writing towards the opposite pole and concentrate on the conscious and intellectual elements in what he described as a 'move abroad'. He chose different forms in which to write, including plays, a libretto for an oratorio and scripts for films. He emerged from his earlier opacity and volunteered information about his preoccupation with the timeless evils that afflict mankind. He presented himself as intelligent, high-minded, educated, well read and in touch with the burning issues of the day. He adopted a politically correct attitude towards global warming, pollution, child care, feminism, and the nuclear threat. He stated his views on the role of the writer in society, described his method of writing fiction and clarified his aims and goals in lengthy introductions and prefaces.

The oratorio represents McEwan's most extreme swing towards the use of conscious material. Having collected a great deal of information, he arrived at the conviction that world problems could be resolved by binding the intellect to: 'our deepest intuition, to dissolve the sterile division between what is 'out there' and what is 'in here', to grasp that the Tao, our science and our art describe the same reality - to be whole' (*OSWD*, p. 14). There are echoes here of Jung's belief that 'The upheaval of our world and the upheaval in consciousness is one and the same' (*MM*, p. 243). He had struggled to convey this message through the medium of the novel, but found that he had 'thought of everything and felt too much' (*MA*, p. XX), to leave scope for his imagination. The oratorio provided him with a temporary escape from these constraints, because here he could state his preoccupations and present his moral arguments 'directly and without embarrassment' (*MA*, p. XXI). He could make an overt attempt to 'engage and persuade' (*MA*, p. XXVI), in the belief that 'the responsibility for survival is a collective one' (*OSWD*, p. 4). The title and the last words pertaining to this are: 'Shall there be womanly times? Or shall we die?', which McEwan considers to be the question for the millennium.[86] As Sheila MacLeod hastens to explain: 'I don't think McEwan is saying that men should be more like women, but rather that we all, whether men or women, impoverish ourselves by losing sight of the intuitive principle'.[87] Good and evil appear in these productions as universal symbols from the collective unconscious. The archetypes are said, by Jung, to have been shaped over millennia by the collective

[86] C. Jung's paper, *Aion*, discusses the end of the Millennium and the effect that he believes the 'Age of Aquarius' will have on the psychic wholeness of increasing numbers of ordinary people, in *Collected Works*, vol. 9.2 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959).
[87] Sheila MacLeod, 'A Child of Our Time', *The Guardian* (11 Sept. 1987), p. 13.

experiences of mankind, and to be shared by all members of the human race. When activated, they create the symbols which are apprehended through sacred images or works of art (e.g. the halo or the totem-pole). They can also be projected on to persons in the public arena of politics or religion, who then enact rites and rituals or incite large groups to re-enact the archetypal themes, which are impersonal and primitive. The rites of passage, when performed in small groups, focus on individuals who are about to pass from one stage of life to another, mark these transitions and point the way forward, while religious sacraments help people to keep in touch with their spiritual life.[88] The archetypal symbol is never experienced in personal consciousness without the illusion of its spontaneous appearance in the outside world. For example, evil can be experienced as a personal quality which may be 'owned' in consciousness and 'worked through' or repressed and projected. Alternatively it can be met with in the outside world and instantly identified as pure evil or the devil, as happens to June in *Black Dogs*. These symbols seem to emanate from some remote and powerful source and bring with them a deep and significant sense of mystery (numinosity).[89] Interpretations from this depth help to reveal the thread of continuity throughout McEwan's work.

In the three novels that follow his 'move abroad', *The Child in Time*, *The Innocent* and *Black Dogs*, McEwan strikes a balance between the conscious and unconscious elements of his work and avoids the one-sidedness of the short stories and novellas (biased towards the unconscious) on the one hand, and the screenplays and various articles and essays (biased towards the conscious side) on the other. All three novels deal with the need to reconcile intellect with feeling, while the unconscious appears in projections on to the world of politics of the archetypes of the mother (death) and the child (re-birth). Conflict, rage, rape and dismemberment can be used interchangeably with war, explosions, invasion of neighbouring cities and partition of conquered territory. Their deeper, unconscious meaning (whether presented as factual statements of events and actions, as metaphors or as symbols) lies in their close association with the archetypes. In contrast with the early stories, where the landscapes are often bizarre representations of the inner world, the novels offer realistically described settings, easily recognised in time and space, which contain the unconscious elements in a factual framework.

The Daydreamer, McEwan's book for children, begins a new story from the position of someone who has achieved maturity and is helping others to do the same. He claims to have told and

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[88] Jung gives a detailed exposition of this in 'Transformation Symbolism of the Mass', *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).

[89] The term 'numinous' applies to beings and forces which man experiences as fascinating, terrible, overpowering, or feels to be sacred or holy.

retold these stories to his stepdaughters, Polly and Alice, and later his sons, William and Gregory.[90] The protagonist, Peter Fortune, keeps in touch with his unconscious by indulging in frequent daydreams. He employs the mythopoetic process and personal symbols to cope creatively with the problems of maturation, and 'works through' rather than represses thoughts and feelings which threaten him with anxiety. It is significant that *The Daydreamer* is narrated in the third person but also contains an omniscient, avuncular presence, easily construed as the voice of the author. This is in direct contrast to an illusory identification with the protagonists of the short stories in which McEwan uses first person narrative so effectively that it comes as a relief to remember that he is not describing his own real experiences. The stories contain material from McEwan's own childhood with generous additions of wish-fulfilment. It is not unusual to rework unpleasant events in hindsight into a more satisfactory scenario. It is imaginable that McEwan, who admits to being so inconspicuous at school that teachers called him Hawkins - mistaking him for another boy[91] - may wish to present Peter as the withdrawn but imaginative genius, misunderstood at school.

The themes of sex and death appear again in *The Daydreamer*, but here there are strong safeguards against acting them out. McEwan reassures the reader that the action is safely contained in Peter's head, Peter himself is safely contained within a loving family, which is contained in turn in a benevolent, middle-class sub-culture, and even then the story is carefully censored by the avuncular author. This makes it safe for Peter to make his whole family disappear and to treat the Bad Doll to his hatred and contempt. This is described so innocuously that it is easy to miss the thread connecting these two scenarios with the disappearance of Maisie in 'Solid Geometry', the dismemberment of Otto in *The Innocent* and the gruelling murder of the doll in 'Dead As They Come'.

In an interview with *American Book Center*,[92] McEwan states that the four novels - *The Child in Time*, *The Innocent*, *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love* are a four-volume book of ideas. Even so, *Enduring Love* is very different from the three earlier novels. McEwan seems to have come to the end of the spontaneous eruptions of material from his unconscious and now relies increasingly on factual and intellectual material. It can be argued that the plot of *Enduring Love*, and the character of Jed Parry, are to some extent dictated by the psychiatric literature to which he refers, and may thus come as a surprise to some readers, but not to McEwan himself. James Wood comments: 'McEwan is a good

[90] Annalena McAfee, 'Dreams, Demons and a Rare Talent to Disturb', *The Financial Times* (1 Oct. 1994), p. 21.
[91] Daoust, 'Post-Shock Traumatic: Profile of Ian McEwan', p. 6.
[92] Anon, *Featured Author: Ian McEwan: American Book Center* (http://www.abc.nl/basement/hansj/text/mcewan.html).

and not a great writer because he seems to lack a capacity for deep aesthetic surprise'.[93] His latest book, *Amsterdam*, marks a change from his four novels both in length and content. In it he revisits the themes of adolescence and youth from the perspective of the second half of life, beyond the next important maturational phase - that of the mid-life crisis, where sex and death have a very different meaning.

An important axiom in psychodynamic theory is that man's salvation (individual as well as collective) lies in achieving more consciousness, not less. Repression removes energy and drive from the personality and leaves areas of over-sensitivity and a tendency to over-react to or reject ideas or avoid situations of potential value in terms of satisfactions and growth. It is usual, when unconscious material has been recognised, owned and integrated, for a process of understanding (insight) to trigger and maintain a fundamental change in the personality. Both patients in analysis and creative artists tend to grow and mature, while the work of authors can show a similar change in the characters portrayed in their fiction. There is no comparison between the protagonist in 'Homemade' and Stephen in *The Child in Time* and McEwan is now able to say:

> Your relationship to things like money, sex, literature, children, goes through imperceptible shifts. Meanwhile the story unfolds of your own books coming out, which is a [story] in itself. This followed by this followed by this. It's a story that you're not entirely in control of shaping.[94]

Eleven years later he admits:

> I was rather taken aback when it was the mere subject matter of the stories that fascinated people. I hadn't thought of them as subject matter before. Then I realised I must have many half-articulated conflicts in dark places within me finding their way on to the page.[95]

Storr remarks:

> One of the most interesting features of any creative person's work is how it changes over time...the capacity to create provides an irreplaceable opportunity for personal development in isolation...[The author's] passage through life is defined by the changing nature and increasing maturity of his work, rather than by his relations with others.[96]

This seems to support the idea of parallel development in the creative and the inner life, and these changes are particularly amenable to study with reference to McEwan's metaplot.

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[93] James Wood, *Too Hard and Clean: Electronic Mail and Guardian* (http://www.mg.co.za/mg/books/nov97/3nov-mcewan.html).
[94] Mathur, 'Nice Not Nasty', p. 44.
[95] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 8.
[96] Storr, *Solitude*, p. 154.

Chapter 2 - Madness and Badness

> If you want to argue with Caesar on Caesar's terms, then you had better write expository prose in which to propound in the clearest terms your vision of an alternative social order. But if you want to understand Caesar, and why he recurs and how we are in him as much as he is in us, then tilt back your chair... (*MA*, p. XVIII)

McEwan claims a higher purpose than mere shock and sensationalism for his early work. Jung bears this out: 'the repellent things...are of the substance of the psyche and therefore as precious as fragments of manuscript salvaged from ancient ruins. Even the secret and noisome things of the inner life are valuable to modern man' (*MM*, p. 244). The early stories can be seen as vehicles for the expression of material which has found its way around the censor. McEwan deprives his early protagonists of superego control to enable them to act out his fantasies with impunity. These characters are not troubled by conflicts, guilt or remorse and this accounts for both criticism and praise. Mary Hope points out that in these tales, his strength 'lay in the seemingly casual ingenuousness of tone, which made the progression into horror all the more shattering'.[1] Daniel Johnson calls him: 'the precocious shocker of middle-class sensibilities',[2] Anthony Quinn refers to the 'scrofulous horrors of his short stories',[3] while John Carey speaks of: 'This truthful, alert scrutiny [which] is not coldness but a tribute to life's exactitude'.[4] Taylor writes: 'there was talk of new directions and devastating debuts...With hindsight it is easy to say...that this early work was over praised'.[5]

McEwan speaks about the firm limits with which he was brought up.[6] Considerable self-discipline is required to follow a routine of solitary writing for six hours a day, or to persevere with this task, long before rewards are forthcoming and in spite of repeated vitriolic criticism. He describes the sense of liberation he experienced, with the help of drugs, during his bohemian phase and admits that it allowed him to shrug off repressions. According to the psychodynamic models, delinquency results from the acting out of strong impulses when the ego is weak and the superego inadequate or malformed. Repression is ineffective, while dissociation and splitting are used extensively. The separated elements can take on a life of their own, and, when personalised as characters, are readily recognisable as anti-social or psychopathic individuals in their own right. These characters live and move in environments which seem to be projections of their inner world and so fit believably into their backgrounds. This

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[1] Mary Hope, 'Cool Descent into Hell', *The Financial Times* (12 May 1990), p. 15.
[2] Daniel Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', *The Times* (8 Dec. 1990), p. 16.
[3] Anthony Quinn, 'Bitten by Other People's Parents', *The Independent* (27 June 1992), p. 30.
[4] John Carey, 'Tunnel of Love', *The Sunday Times* (13 May 1990), p. 1.
[5] D. J. Taylor, 'Ian McEwan: Standing Up for the Sisters' in *A Vain Conceit: British Fiction in the 1980s* (London. Bloomsbury, 1989), p. 56.
[6] An example can be found in William Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', *Sunday Times* (6 May 1990), 8 – 9

lends them authenticity and creates an unforgettable impression of madness and badness.

McEwan's intellectual style and occasional flashes of humour serve to separate him from the narrators with whom it is all too easy to identify him, but his moral sense is easily lost on the reader. His use of projective identification ensures sympathy with the victims and moral censure of the perpetrators. The notion that all the dramatis personae represent different aspects of McEwan himself, dissociated from one another and endowed with a separate existence (as happens in dreams), is not accepted by everyone. The idea that the innocent, abused and pathetic children are representations of the 'internalised child', and that the behaviour of the aggressors is the response of this same child to distorting repressions, is often misunderstood.

McEwan regards the beginning of his writing career as a turning point in his life. In 1970, when he was twenty-two, he was accepted by Malcolm Bradbury to study for an MA in creative writing at the University of East Anglia. He was the first student on that course and the only one in his year:

> For the very first time in my life I felt genuinely happy. Moving to Norwich seemed like the first real choice I had made in my life...I took a lot of drugs... - mescaline, LSD, grass - ...For me there was great personal liberation...[7]

Bradbury recalls:

> It was in part thanks to McEwan that the British Academic establishment came to accept that a way with words was something that could be taught, rather than a gift from God...He produced about 20 stories that year and he was so impressive that he convinced the university it was worth doing.[8]

The stories, which formed a part of his MA thesis, were published individually in American magazines and *The New Review*. When collected under the title *First Love, Last Rites*, and published by Cape in 1975, they won the Somerset Maugham Award for 1976 and attracted instant attention from critics.

In 1971 McEwan lived in a bed-sitting room in Clapham and wrote about thirty short stories. He supplemented his income from writing with state benefits and temporary jobs. When he sold a story for four hundred pounds, he embarked on a journey of personal liberation. He recalls:

> In 1972 I bought a bus in Amsterdam with two friends and travelled the hippie trail to Afghanistan...During the preceding year in England and all along the route to Kabul I met people who spoke of the world in specifically anti-rationalist terms...and of how psychotropic drugs...might transform the mechanistic, aggressive world we had left behind into the peaceable kingdom. (*IG*, p. 11)

Returning home, he lived modestly on the proceeds of his writing. He continued to write short stories

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[7] Andrew Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', *The Observer* (14 June 1992), p. 29.
[8] Daoust, 'Post-Shock Traumatic: Profile of Ian McEwan', p. 6.

and in 1978 Cape published a second collection, entitled *In Between the Sheets*, written after his move to London from Norwich in January 1974. He found his way to Ian Hamilton and the group of young writers who met informally in 'The Pillars of Hercules' pub and published their work in *The New Review*, which was supported by the Arts Council. Critics were again sharply divided in their assessments. Some eulogised him as a brilliant new writer, whilst others labelled him dirty, nasty and perverse. According to Gerard Gardiner: 'Ian McEwan...[is] among the few who achieved prominence firstly through their short fiction'.[9] His reputation was established on the basis of sixteen short stories.

At first glance none of these stories seems to have anything in common and there is nothing to link them together except the author's style. They are short ('Cocker at the Theatre' is only five pages) and some are written in the first person and present tense. The protagonists speak directly about their personal experiences, which are bizarre and liable to evoke disgust by perverted and insightless behaviour, described in meticulous detail. The reader has the illusion of being privy to the thoughts and feelings of the protagonists, who seem to expect to be understood. They succeed in this to such an extent that the reader can identify with them, no matter how remote their story from his own real or fantasy experience. McEwan claims: 'I was not aware of any pattern, and each story seemed to me at the time of writing to be a fresh departure, often with very trivial rhetorical ambitions' (*NI*, p. 169). On closer examination, most of his early characters are young and many are psychologically disturbed. Their behaviour can be seen as the result of fixation in the early phases of psychosexual development, or regression to them. All use early defence mechanisms to maintain a precarious grip on reality. These are: introjection, projection, splitting, idealisation, denial and denigration. They function to protect the immature ego and, together with repression, continue to be used in adult life. It is only when they are inappropriate, excessive or used habitually that they form the basis of a character neurosis. When they fail to contain unconscious conflicts 'acting out' becomes a possibility. In this situation, an inappropriate or impulsive expression of anger or revenge is directed towards a partner, an enemy or a total stranger. All defences, other than sublimation, operate at the expense of integration, purchasing freedom from anxiety at the price of splitting off, or repression of, parts of the potential integrated self. If the lost parts can be restored, integration is enhanced.

'Solid Geometry' is the first story in the collection *First Love, Last Rites*.[10] It first appeared in *Amazing Stories* in 1973 and was reprinted in *The New Review*:

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[9] Gerard Gardiner, 'Cinderellas of the Trade - Short Stories', *The Financial Times* (6 Feb. 1993), p. 19.

[10] 'Solid Geometry' is the first story in the Picador publication of *First Love, Last Rites*, referred to in this thesis. It appears as the second story in the original publication: *First Love, Last Rites* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975).

> The story had very distinct origins. A mathematician friend from Chile had recently told me of a 'proof' for a plane without a surface and had outlined for me the consequences of such a proof being valid. Independently of this I had been reading Bertrand Russell's diaries and I wanted to write a story which would somehow illustrate the way diary writing, in its selectivity, closely resembles fiction writing. Thirdly I wanted to write about the collision of two intellectual worlds. (*IG*, p. 11)

These three strands are woven together and shot through with unconscious elements. This story contains both the seeds of the main theme which runs through McEwan's work: the opposition of masculine and feminine consciousness. He intended that Maisie and Albert should represent two exaggerated ideas in himself: 'I found the cautious, analytical voices of a literary education vying with the intuitive and carefree' (*IG*, p. 12). In 1978, five years after it was written, McEwan adapted 'Solid Geometry' for television after a commission from Stephen Gilbert for a series called 'The Other Side' at Pebble Mill, Birmingham. It was almost ready for transmission when, on March 20 1979, Phillip Sidey (the administrative Head of BBC Birmingham) and Shaun Sutton (Head of drama group, television) banned the play and put out a press notice which described 'grotesque and bizarre sexual elements' which made the play 'untransmittable', and the production was halted. In those early days, McEwan had not learned to manage 'audience response control'.[11] Nor did he appreciate the power of primary process thinking.[12] He admits that while 'daydreaming' he 'had no sense of...symbols...[he] certainly wasn't inserting symbols into the story' (*NI*, p. 172). This is what makes his early work so rich in material for interpretation and justifies the detailed and lengthy exposition of symbols in this thesis.

It can be argued that the detached penis is central to the whole story, because it suggests the mechanism of splitting. It is not unusual for the penis to be related to as if it had an independent existence and given nicknames because of erections and ejaculations which are not always under conscious control. Albert identifies the penis with its one-time owner: 'to the left sits Capt. Nicholls in the glass jar' (*FLLR*, p. 9). The bottled penis and the bottled organ of Lady Barrymore are part-objects. Melanie Klein believes that 'under the dominance of oral desires, the penis is strongly equated with the breast'.[13] Oral phase fantasies centre on the belief that the penis can be milked or swallowed for sustenance. Maisie accuses Albert of a perverted interest in the specimen with her questions: 'Did you suck it off?' (*FLLR*, p. 22) and 'Did you eat it?' (*IG*, p. 73). Inherent in these accusations is the

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[11] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.

[12] Primary and secondary processes are different types of mental functioning. Primary process is characteristic of unconscious mental activity and appears in dreams and fantasies. It displays condensation and displacement so that images tend to become fused and can readily replace and symbolise one another. It ignores the categories of time and space and is governed by the 'pleasure principle'. Secondary process thinking is characteristic of conscious mental activity. It obeys the forms of grammar and logic, is used in constructive thought and is governed by the 'reality principle'.

[13] Juliet Mitchel (ed.), *The Selected Melanie Klein* (Harmondsworth: Peregrine Books, 1986), p. 219.

recognition that Albert's obsession with Captain Nicholls' penis and his great-grandfather's diaries stems from Albert's sexual inadequacy. The incorporative mode, used here to relate to the specimen, allows it to provide food for the imagination as well as the straightforward satisfaction of being able to look at it at will: 'Look at that, Maxwell! Wonderful, quite wonderful. I must have it' (*IG*, p. 46). In oral phase fantasies the penis (and the breast) can be stolen and incorporated.[14] When separated by cutting or biting off, the penis is the focus of castration anxiety. An illustration of such anxieties is provided by the reassurances of the auctioneer in the screenplay version:

> Auctioneer: This anatomical curiosity...I have it on absolute authority
> that the good, late Doctor severed the part only *minutes after death*,
> not, as wild, irresponsible rumour puts out, minutes before. (*IG*, p. 45)

The penis is a universal symbol of masculinity so that its possession can be felt to confer power, status, potency and fertility. The plethora of phallic symbols expresses a range of male attributes from magical power (magic wand), through status (the sceptre), leadership (the conductor's baton), achievement and aspiration (towers and spires), to swords, bayonets, lances, knives and guns. These symbols are not attached to people. They can be displayed or used, bequeathed to successors, or wrested from their possessor. In the story, the penis has a very ambiguous meaning. Jung writes:

> As was customary throughout antiquity, primitive people today make a free use of phallic symbols, yet it never occurs to them to confuse the phallus, as a ritualistic symbol, with the penis. They always take the phallus to mean the creative *mana*, the power of healing and fertility, 'that which is unusually potent'. (*MM*, p. 26)

The personalisation of Captain Nicholls' penis, the value placed on its possession and the preservation of its existence for 160 years, brand it as a personal symbol, rich in meaning to the great-grandfather and Albert, but to the uninitiated, bizarre and disgusting. The readers are placed in a privileged position by McEwan, who allows the narrator to let them into the secret of its value and meaning. Captain Nicholls, and especially his penis, symbolise the lower masculinity of the phallic phase and Albert uses the specimen as a focus for fantasies about its sexual and excretory adventures while still attached to Captain Nicholls:

> I thought of all the places it had been...travelling in the dark, fetid inside of Capt. Nicholls's leather breaches...I thought also of...Captain Nicholls's exploring hands on lonely unrequited nights at sea, the sweating walls of cunts of young girls and old whores... (*FLLR*, p. 18)

Once out of its jar the narrator 'buried him under the geraniums' (*FLLR*, p. 18) and is then able to withdraw his projections and refer to this same penis as 'only a prick in pickle' (*FLLR*, p. 22).

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[14] Primitive aggression and envy are experienced towards part-objects (breast, penis, mother's 'inside') which become the objects of 'oral sadism' expressed by biting, tearing to pieces and spitting out after chewing.

The higher masculinity is represented by the great-grandfather's thoughts, contained in the diaries, especially abstract mathematics, which he excelled in. This is the most refined example of 'intellect divorced from feeling' (*OSWD*, p. 10). Storr makes it clear that intellectual activity is a masculine form of self-assertion derived from sublimated aggression:

> In mastering intellectual problems, attacking difficulties, sharpening their wits, or penetrating to the heart of a mystery, men are using, however peaceably, energy which, in the last analysis, is derived from the primitive aggressive drive to gain ascendance over the environment.[15]

Albert approaches the task of editing the diary in the incorporative mode. It represents an enormous store of nourishment and good experience, available unconditionally, on demand. His work follows a digestive paradigm. He takes in the thoughts of the great-grandfather, chews them over, selects some and discards others. He digests them, assimilates them, or prepares them for consumption by a potential reader. In addition, he finds abundant expression for sublimated anal drives by applying 'the apparatus of scholarship' (*IG*, p. 48): 'I was going through old newspapers, compiling indexes, cataloguing items' (*FLLR*, p. 10). This is an excellent description of obsessional activity, without even a pretence of the originality or initiative which distinguish masculine intellectual endeavour. An over-investment in the intellect, especially retentive memory, and mastery of control over verbal expression can serve to sublimate the anal phase drives. Most of Albert's libido, like that of his great-grandfather, seems to have been fixated in the oral and anal phases. As development proceeds, different areas of the body and different functions become invested with libido but there is always an appreciable amount of libidinal energy which remains committed to the earlier zones. If difficulties are encountered in the next phase, regression to the earlier stage and further investment in that zone is possible. If progress can not be made, the personality becomes fixated in the early phase so that at any future age, the bulk of the satisfactions are experienced, sought and expected in connection with stimulation of that zone. The person's behaviour becomes organised to maximise these gratifications. These activities are sublimated into culturally approved 'tastes' which can become very discriminating and refined in time.

The disappearance of Maxwell, in a childlike spirit of hilarity, teasing and play, reads like a naughty game of 'hide and seek' which magically turns nasty. This same scenario is very different when it involves Hunter. He too has made an almost complete identification with his overvalued idea and invested his libido in the pure intellectual abstractions of higher mathematics. There is an element of exhibitionism in his wish to jump the queue and astonish his elders with the size and value of his

[15] Anthony Storr, *Human Aggression* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 88.

seminal thought. There is certainly a note of triumph in his last words: 'Behold, gentlemen...the plane without a surface' (*FLLR*, p. 17). It could be argued that this is an Oedipal or phallic contest, fought and won in the highest possible intellectual arena. It can also be seen as a commitment to a part-object, experienced by Hunter as 'all good' and offered to the conference as food for contemplation but rejected by the delegates like a dangerous or poisonous breast, spat out in the late incorporative phase. The paranoid reaction of the assembled mathematicians is inappropriate to the reception of a scientific theory: 'the whole room turned on Hunter and directed at him a senseless babble of denunciation, invective and threat' (*FLLR*, p. 19). The learned assembly turns into a witch hunt, reacting with signal anxiety.[16]

Apart from the penis, the diaries and the 'plane without a surface', there are other symbols in 'Solid Geometry'. The tree is a symbol for the Self and echoes Maisie's preoccupation with finding herself by exploring non-rational paths to enlightenment. Albert's misogyny is implicit in his intention to 'take a long holiday, travel somewhere cold and clean and treeless, Iceland or the Russian Steppes' (*FLLR*, p. 9). Landscapes can be symbolic of the mother, so Albert's longing for something cold and sterile may be seen as a reaction to an early experience of over-protection and seduction by a mother who smothered him with her emotional intensity in the oral phase. A much more threatening mother symbol is the swamp. When progress into the phallic phase is blocked, the boy experiences a fear of re-identification with the mother, who is ready to deprive him of his masculine identity and drown his autonomy in her omnipotence. In the middle of a harangue against Maisie, Albert complains: 'you fell into a swamp of respectable intuitions' (*FLLR*, p. 14). Intuition and feeling are usually regarded as feminine functions.[17] They appear here in denigrated terms, and show Albert's fear of losing himself in the maternal swamp. Other mother symbols are the spiders, who witness his symbolic evacuations. However, it seems that the battle with the anal phase mother had been won by Albert, as the spiders are presented as small, non-threatening, pathetic and defeated. The toddler's original attitude to excrement is coprophilic. Urine and faeces are felt to be personal creations which have great value and magical properties. They have emerged from inside the self, which is usually felt to be good, and, as an effort had to be made to retain them for a time and more efforts expounded in their evacuation, they come to be experienced as the first and prototypical examples of creativity. Early training towards continence

[16] Signal anxiety is the anxiety which signals the emergence of repressed material from the unconscious and acts as a warning to mobilise defence mechanisms to protect the ego from dangerous feelings and images.

[17] Jung postulates the existence of four functions by means of which reality is apprehended: thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. He thinks that individuals are born with a predilection for one function (the primary function) with another as secondary and the other two, which he calls inferior functions, poorly developed until the second half of life. The culture also favours the development of some functions more than others. Thinking and sensation are traditionally the masculine functions. Feeling and intuition are feminine functions.

eventually produces a coprophobic attitude, which usually aids the sublimation of these drives towards culturally consonant expressions of creativity. It also gives rise to the hoarding and saving of objects and substances less offensive to the carers, which in turn become endowed with a sense of value and significance out of proportion to their actual worth and usefulness, for example money or collections.

The voice of the father can be recognised in Albert's critical homilies, which are like those of a strict father towards a spoilt and demanding child. The marital relationship is not mutual or sexual, even at a symbolic level. It is clear to the reader that Albert is projecting his own deficiencies on to Maisie and, from this position, she is unable to make any difference to his view of her. Comments like 'You've never been anywhere...you've never done anything' (*FLLR*, p. 14) apply to Albert, and his much-admired great-grandfather, as much as to her. Albert adopts a seductive and castrating attitude towards her, more commonly found in immature and hysterical women's behaviour towards men. He leads her on and then disappoints her: 'Maisie wanted something. To restrain her I placed my right hand on her left, and mistaking this for affection, she leaned forward and kissed under my ear' (*FLLR*, p. 17). It could be argued that Maisie is a masochist and that it is pathological to stay with someone who gives nothing but disappointment and humiliation. However, Albert is a skilful weaver of the web and traps his victim. He does not repress anger, he suppresses it (bottles it up) or pushes it into Maisie by projective identification so that she feels it and expresses it for him.

The third disappearance is different from either of the preceding ones. There is no self-sacrifice, as with Hunter, and no mutual game between consenting partners, as with Maxwell. It is the culmination of hostility and rejection towards Maisie over seven years. Albert's previous attempts to damage her with his biting sarcasm or to screw her up 'like a piece of paper' (*FLLR*, p. 15) reach a climax of ruthless destructiveness.[18] It seems as if, far from Maisie being jealous of him, he is eaten up with envy of her: 'Excessive envy of the breast is likely to extend to all feminine attributes, in particular to the woman's capacity to bear children'.[19] Maisie's crime is her femininity:

> Under the cruel pretence of making love to her at last, he enlists pure, disembodied rationality to annihilate the menstruating, baby-making body that repels him. It is a clean, bloodless murder without a corpse, an elegantly austere solution which affords all the satisfaction of slaying without the messy guilt. (*Ryan*, p. 11)

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[18] Melanie Klein draws a sharp distinction between jealousy and envy which are sometimes almost synonymous in common speech: both are strong emotional responses to the situation where someone is faced with the reality of another who is enjoying some good experience which is not available to the self. Envy is primitive and begins with the feeling that the breast is full of goodness which it withholds and the wish to take it away and spoil it to deprive the other of satisfaction. Envy is destructive and ruthless and has a 'dog-in-the-manger' quality. Jealousy is the wish to take away, if necessary to rob the other of the goodness which is desired for one's self. It usually refers to whole persons or relationships between them and has its prototype in the Oedipus complex.

[19] Mitchel (ed.), *The Selected Melanie Klein*, p 219.

Albert's hatred of Maisie stems from his use of her as a receptacle for the projection of his own repudiated feminine side (anima), his rejected internalised child, his repressed Oedipal wishes and denied dependence on his pre-Oedipal mother. In this, he resembles Robert, in *The Comfort of Strangers*, who also owes his sadistic misogyny to a complete identification with the masculine and denigration of the feminine principle. Maisie, like Caroline, represents all that Albert and Robert wish to punish and destroy in themselves in the belief that this is their only path to manhood. It is hard to agree with McEwan that 'Solid Geometry' is 'a little too neat and at best simply clever' (*IG*, p. 12). This scene is arguably as sadistic as the celebrated murder in *The Comfort of Strangers* or the dismemberment of Otto in *The Innocent*. Albert has no interest in what happens to Maisie and no appreciation of her love and trust.

There had been no earlier hint of the archetypal nature of the 'plane without a surface'. Indeed, it seemed to be an early manifestation of McEwan's interest in the new physics, which postulates many more dimensions than the familiar four and the existence of parallel universes. Albert, however, experiences a numinous meaning in the shape of the paper which he folds according to Hunter's and the great-grandfather's instructions:

> Each line seemed to express, in its length, angle of incline and point of intersection...some mysterious inner harmony of numbers...I felt I was blindly operating a system of the highest, most terrifying form of knowledge, the mathematics of the Absolute. (*FLLR*, p. 21)

The shape described is a mandala,[20] as is 'the hoop' which the body is made to assume. Mandalas are symbols of completeness, usually reserved for the central archetype of the Self, known in most cultures by the many names of the God. Elements of the ritual preparation of the victim are not obvious, until the end is revealed. Usually he or she is given a happy experience, drugged, bathed, scented and either dressed in ritual garments, or stripped naked, and arranged in a particular shape during a rite of sacrifice. Albert is not knowingly sacrificing Maisie to anything or anyone. It is as if a child has stumbled by chance on a formula for calling up the devil and repeats the words and makes the signs, to find that the summoned fiend has really materialised. The hoop, as an imperfect circle, can symbolise the evil pole of the archetype. McEwan says that he intended the irony: 'Albert uses the very system (the mathematics of the Absolute) to dispose of her, that Maisie endorses and he has repudiated' (*IG*, p. 12). It can be argued that McEwan was 'surprised in the act of creation' (*MA*, p. IX). He was certainly surprised by the BBC critics, who may have been put in touch with at least some of the feelings evoked

[20] Mandalas are regular shapes: the circle, the square, the six-pointed star, the crystal are examples.

by his symbolism. He consciously intended Albert to represent the worst in western masculine attitudes. Western cultures have a vested interest in producing individuals who are clean, punctual, emotionally continent and submissive to authority. Such individuals accept rules and regulations, can be slotted comfortably into bureaucratic systems, and do not tend to behave wilfully or defiantly. Many of these traits are promoted by strict parental emphasis on toilet training. In cultures which do not demand conformity, the toddler is allowed to gain control in his own time, at his own pace and according to his own wishes. These cultures do not foster obsessional neurosis or the use of faeces as a weapon, later sublimated into explosive projectiles like bombs, the throwing of profanity and insults, the smearing of reputations, or the sense that one's inside is full of noxious matter (faeces, anger, etc.), which must be contained at great cost to the self, or voided explosively with consequent harm to others. Albert is not a typical western male, but a severely obsessional person exhibiting features of: compulsive behaviour; reaction formation; rigid control; superstitiousness and fear of spontaneity. The splitting off of the intellect from the rest of the personality, the failure to negotiate the depressive position and the reluctance to engage in sexual activity brand him as neurotic, even by the standards of his culture and his time.[21] Maisie, on the other hand (who is intended to represent the sixties counter culture), is depicted as a warm and loving person, committed to individuation and to 'sex and truthfulness about the inner life' (*MA*, p. XIII).

There are echoes of the relationship between the great-grandfather and Maxwell in the friendship between Raymond and the protagonist in 'Homemade', despite the vast differences in their respective ages. 'Homemade' is the second story in the first collection, written in McEwan's postgraduate year and first published in *The New American Review*. Material for the relationship between the protagonist and Raymond may have been drawn from McEwan's experience in boarding school:

> the older boys, by which I mean the 12-year-olds, were constantly involved in a kind of intimidation. Not necessarily by bullying, although that went on. By sort of propagation of what sexual knowledge they had.[22]

McEwan suffered painful loneliness in his adolescence:

> I felt baffled by the changes within me, and guilty too...there was no question of comparing notes at school...our emotional training was such that we did not admit confusion or pain even to ourselves, let alone to one another.[23]

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[21] Jung defines neurosis as: 'an inner cleavage - the state of being at war with one's self...What drives people to war with themselves is the intuition or the knowledge that they consist of two persons in opposition to one another. The conflict may be between the sensual and the spiritual man or between the ego and the shadow. A neurosis is a dissociation of personality', C. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Ark, 1984), p 273.

[22] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 8.

He told Christopher Ricks that adolescents are an: 'extraordinary, special case of people; they're close to childhood, and yet they are constantly baffled and irritated by the initiations into what's on the other side - the shadow line, as it were'.[24] The relationship between the narrator and Raymond is superficially like a homosexual pairing at the stage when boys emerge from the latency period to take up sexual interests repressed in the genital phase. By the age of fourteen, with Raymond's guidance, the protagonist has learnt to masturbate, smoke cigarettes, drink whisky, use cannabis and had acquired 'a connoisseur's taste for violence and obscenity' (*FLLR*, p. 28).

Unlike the great-grandfather and Maxwell, the two friends never seem to have negotiated the 'depressive position' and in their childhood indulge in oral sadistic pastimes: 'We walked across Finsbury Park where once Raymond...had fed glass splinters to the pigeons, where together...we had roasted alive Sheila Harcourt's budgerigar' (*FLLR*, p. 28). Raymond is older, bigger and stronger than the protagonist and ahead of him in initiatives, but he is his intellectual inferior and presents neither challenge nor threat. The protagonist delights in telling the reader about Raymond's pathetic failures. His contempt and sardonic amusement at Raymond's expense, may be the expression of feelings transferred onto Raymond, from his father and uncles:

> I used to laugh when I thought of the twelve-hour shift my father worked in the flour mill, of his exhausted, blanched, ill-tempered face...I laughed because I knew that a good afternoon's work in the book shop earned more than they scraped together in a week. (*FLLR*, p. 31)

The father is the power and authority in the family and it pays to keep misdeeds a secret from him: 'it would not do to go scaring my little sister, who would...[tell] my father...and that would mean...laborious lies to invent, shouting and crying' (*FLLR*, p 35). The protagonist's hate and envy militate against identification with his father, so that his superego develops in opposition to his father's working class ethics. His brittle sense of superiority hides an inferiority complex and massive anxiety about his place in the masculine world. His limited idea of manhood depends on winning every phallic competition and excelling in sexual performance. True to his experience of people as part-objects, this protagonist 'thought about cunt' (*FLLR*, p. 33), he 'saw it in the smile of the bus conductress...conjectured it beneath the skirts of passing housewives...' (*FLLR*, p. 34). Like the 'un-named portion of the late Lady Barrymore' (*FLLR*, p. 9) in 'Solid Geometry', this 'cunt' is not experienced as an integral part of a person but as a container for his 'ill-defined longings as well as

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[23] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[24] Ricks, 'Adolescence and After', p. 526.

mere curiosity' (*FLLR*, p. 29). Like Albert, he sets about structuring a situation where he can get his own way, without betraying his intentions or running the risk of shameful failure. Control by duress or fantasy rather than a true reciprocity forms a basic element in anal sadism and premature genitality. When his parents go out together, leaving him to look after Connie, he suggests 'a game which all home-loving, unimaginative little girls like Connie find irresistible...Mummies and Daddies' (*FLLR*, p. 36):

> She was transformed, she was ecstatic...I was plunged into the microcosm of the dreary, everyday, ponderous banalities, the horrifying, niggling details of the life of our parents and their friends, the life that Connie so dearly wanted to ape. (*FLLR*, p. 36)

The Electra complex is the equivalent of the Oedipus complex in girls and women and consists of a turning away from the mother, towards the father. This is never complete as identification with the mother is important for the girl and need never be abandoned as is the case with boys. The importance of the father's love and approval, together with the opportunity to practice sexual and care-taking postures in safety and freedom from fear of abuse, add greatly to the girl's self-esteem and confidence in the value of her femininity. Jealousy of the mother and competition for the father's attention can contribute to incestuous wishes which may be acted out in dysfunctional families. The recent outcry from the feminist lobby (exemplified by Ward) against Freud's dismissal of reports by women of father-daughter incest as fantasies belonging to the Electra complex, is justified to some extent.[25]

The invitation to the reader to make an identification with Connie and the family is encouraged by the narrator's contempt. A deep longing for domesticity and safety must have been repressed by him long ago and replaced with hostility towards all three members of his family, whose closeness he felt excluded from by his hate. Connie, who is safely identified with her mother, has no problems in her latency period. She practises her future role without guilt or anxiety: 'She just cooked on the stove...washed, fed, put to sleep and roused her sixteen dolls...She was the inter-galactic-earth-goddess-housewife, she owned and controlled all around her' (*FLLR*, p. 36). The protagonist's 'reaction formation'[26] serves to cope with the phallic male's envy of the female's power and of the early relationship between mother and daughter. The reader might conceivably sympathise with his pain at being left out[27] if he did not go on to say: 'It was almost a shame I had it in mind to rape her' (*FLLR*, p.

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[25] Elizabeth Ward, 'Freud and the Legacy of Mindbending' in *Father/Daughter Rape* (London: Women's Press, 1984), pp. 100 - 18.

[26] Reaction-formation is the 'defensive process (defence mechanism) by which an unacceptable impulse is mastered by exaggeration (hypertrophy) of the opposing tendency. Solicitude may be a reaction-formation against cruelty, cleanliness against coprophilia, etc. Reaction-formation is regarded in classical theory as an obsessional defence and it is usually assumed that the unconscious, rejected impulse survives in its original, infantile form', Rycroft, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, p. 136.

[27] Neglect, deprivation, rejection and abandonment are the feared traumas in the oral phase, while being 'left' and being 'left out' are the chief neurotic preoccupations.

37). He tells the reader:

> This may have been one of the most desolate couplings known to copulating mankind, involving lies, deceit, humiliation, incest, my partner falling asleep, my gnat's orgasm and the sobbing which now filled the bedroom, but I was pleased with it...pleased to let things rest a while, to let the matter drop. (*FLLR*, p. 40)

So, at the age of fourteen, he finally, belatedly, arrives in the latency period, having wasted much of his childhood in futile pursuits and doomed efforts to be a man while he was still a boy: 'While others of our age picked their noses over their stamp collections or homework, Raymond and I spent many hours [listening to workmen telling of] cunts, bits, skirt' (*FLLR*, p. 29). He acts out his sadistic wishes towards the whole family in a scene whose climax shows the condensation of primary process thinking, like a dream. Connie is mother and baby, he is father and successful rival in the parental bed. Here the acting out of Oedipal wishes is contaminated with hate and the envious spoiling of Connie's innocence in revenge for the hurts of his nursery years which neither she nor the parents knew they had inflicted.

While most authorities hold that brother-sister incest is not damaging, this assumes an equality of status, as in *The Cement Garden*. Elizabeth Ward makes the point that:

> many older brothers rape their sisters within much the same authoritarian rape/power framework as adult fathers...larger/older males within the family have power over girl children...The rapist being a brother does not turn rape into innocent sex play. The fact that some similar-age brother-sister sexual arrangements are truly mutual and satisfying for the female as well as the male, does not mean that all sibling sexual activity is non-damaging.[28]

The secondary gain of 'beating Raymond to the post' is conscious, while the idea of raping Connie bears the stamp of the 'return of the repressed'. As D. J. Taylor points out, 'Homemade' is:

> also a hilarious send up of male attitudes to sexuality, so effective that disgust at the incident is replaced by laughter at the satire...The serious moral point, the point about how men ought to treat women, succeeds by way of its understatement.[29]

Kiernan Ryan agrees with this: 'the merely salacious possibilities of the story are subverted by the wicked black humour with which it mocks masculine postures and travesties the domestic script most adults wind up acting out' (*Ryan*, p. 7).

Like 'Homemade', 'Pornography' is about ambivalence and rivalry between two male characters, this time O'Byrne and his older brother Harold. 'Pornography' is the first story in the second collection and when it was first published in *The New Review* in February 1972 'a number of readers cancelled their subscriptions'.[30] It is arguably the 'dirtiest' of McEwan's stories in that it deals with the dissemination of venereal disease, frankly sadistic sex and punitive castration as well as

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[28] Ward, *Father/Daughter Rape*, p. 128.
[29] Taylor, *A Vain Conceit: British Fiction in the 1980s*, p. 58.
[30] Anon, 'Taciturn Macabre and Unseen Truths', *The Birmingham Sun* (30 Nov. 1983), p. 8.

pornography. Mercifully, the characters are all adult and equally culpable. It illustrates anal sadism - the perversion of sexual drive in the service of power and control. Unlike oral sadism, which seeks to rip, tear and dismember, anal sadism aims to enslave and subordinate. Pain and suffering are sometimes inflicted in the process because when humiliation does not suffice to exert control and realise power over the victim, torture and murder do. This story looks back to 'Solid Geometry' and 'Cocker at the Theatre' and forward to *The Comfort of Strangers*. In his reminiscences about the time of his association with Ian Hamilton McEwan writes: 'The trips to Greek Street gave me a short story 'Pornography".[31]

Like Raymond, Harold has his uses and needs to be placated, but O'Byrne calls him 'Little Runt' behind his back: 'Harold was barely five foot and wore built-up shoes' and 'pebble-thick lenses' (*IBS*, p. 11). This is reminiscent of the interviewers' descriptions of McEwan himself, in the early bed-sitting room days, when comments were made about his small size, his thick glasses and his 'dirty writing': 'Thick specs, sick sex'.[32] McEwan deeply resents being identified with his perverted narrators: 'I cannot bear being a foaming freak. I am utterly fed up with the trembling psychopath scowling grimly behind his glasses'.[33] O'Byrne cultivates sado-masochistic, sexual relationships with two women simultaneously. The ease with which the role of sadist and masochist can be exchanged is vividly demonstrated here. Psychoanalysts agree that: 'masochistic and sadistic trends are always blended with each other. Although on the surface they seem contradictions, they are essentially rooted in the same basic need'.[34] When visiting Pauline, O'Byrne behaves in an arrogant, dismissive and callous fashion, hurting and humiliating her. With Lucy he adopts a supine, inferior role while she abuses and denigrates him. Lucy is ten years older than Pauline and a ward sister in the same hospital in which Pauline is a student nurse. Harold is ten years older than O'Byrne and also in a position of authority. O'Byrne has projected the roles of master and slave on to the two women. By deciding which woman to visit he ensures a choice of role for himself and therefore manages to remain in control of the satisfaction of his oscillating needs.

The women's revenge is reminiscent of the cupboard man's castration of 'Pus-face', but it is harder to feel that justice has been served because they are independent, responsible and collude together, misusing their professional skills in inflicting a carefully premeditated punishment which far

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[31] Ian McEwan, 'Wild Man of Literature (c 1976)', *The Observer* (7 June 1998), p. 16.
[32] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] E. Fromm, *Fear of Freedom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1942), p. 136.

outweighs his crime and their injury. Savage retribution of this sort points to an immature superego and suggests that the milder sadistic activities in the sexual scenes are based on a guilt-and-punishment scenario. The reader is reminded of Caroline's explanation to Mary in a later story: 'It's not the pain itself, it's the fact of the pain, of being helpless before it and being reduced to nothing by it. It's pain in a particular context, being punished and therefore being guilty' (*CS*, p. 109). Here too the reader is told: 'Through his fear O'Byrne felt excitement once more, horrified excitement' (*IBS*, p. 26).

The same cannot be said of the protagonist of 'Butterflies', the fifth story in the first collection, first published in *The New Review*. He is arguably the most damaged and emotionally disturbed of all McEwan's characters. He is a loner whose inner life, symbolised by a depressed suburban neighbourhood, is so arid and his psyche so fragmented that his act is almost out of reach of his own consciousness. It forms no part of his fantasy. The events happen to him almost like an inevitable, unintentional mistake, without malice aforethought, anger or hate. There is no transference from anyone in his past, to the girl. The protagonist has the precarious hold on reality of a borderline psychotic, very different from the delinquent's street-wise and devious dishonesty, self-interest and conceit in 'Homemade'. Like Jed Parry in *Enduring Love*, he is chronologically adult, lives alone, is unemployed and has no-one in any sort of relationship with him. This story has evoked the most consistently vitriolic criticism from reviewers. McEwan said of it: 'I once wrote a story which I would find impossible to write now...As a parent now, I find that my responses are so much more complex that it would take a lot more to take me into that situation'.[35] Even a sympathetic interviewer, Megan Tresidder, could not resist the temptation to hark back to this tale: 'McEwan went too far with 'Butterflies', a short story that does nothing more (though McEwan says I'm wrong) than revolt...When you come to see him, you feel he owes you an explanation'.[36] She quotes McEwan's answer:

> Well, I think what my 23-year-old self was trying to do was tell a terrible story in such a way that the reader was in collusion with the narrator, but leaving the judgement - which is obvious - open. I think it's a very moral story and you're just not seeing it right.[37]

The shocked outcry from critics may have been understandable in 1975, when the story first appeared in England, but by 1992 the frequency of sexual abuse of children had been publicised extensively and Childline was in operation.

It is possible that resentment of McEwan for writing 'Butterflies' is due not so much to his choice of subject as to his manner of presenting it. In spite of his habitual mistrust of people, the

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[35] Danny Danziger, 'In Search of Two Characters', *The Times* (27 June 1987), p. 13.
[36] Megan Tresidder, 'The Dreamer Who Creates Nightmares', *The Sunday Telegraph* (28 June 1992), p. 2.
[37] *Ibid.*

protagonist takes the reader into his confidence. This creates the illusion of having accepted a relationship of privileged closeness with him. He gives a stoical, matter-of-fact account of his arid isolation and loneliness, emphasised by the contrast of the overcrowded, busy neighbourhood where people have families, homes and things to do: 'Down each street there was the same smell of lunch cooking. I heard the same radio programme through open windows. I saw cats and dogs but very few people, and only from a distance' (*FLLR*, p. 62). Excluded from human companionship, he also feels removed from nature: 'I wanted to be near trees and water' (*FLLR*, p. 62), but there were 'no parks...only car-parks' (*FLLR*, p. 62). When Jane accosts him in the street, he: 'had spoken to no one in several days' (*FLLR*, p. 65), and: 'No one had touched [him] intentionally like that...since [he] was a child' (*FLLR*, p. 67). When he looks at himself in the mirror he remembers his mother's averted face: 'My chin and my neck are the same thing, and it breeds distrust. My mother's was like that too' (*FLLR*, p. 63). 'Mirroring' is an important aspect of mother-baby interaction, as are physical contact and intense maternal preoccupation with the child, approval and smiling. His psychopathology is probably related to his mother's inability to mirror him and give him the reassurance that, in her eyes, he is a lovable and valued person.[38] He identifies with her as no-one else is available and arranges his life in the same pattern as hers: 'she never had friends. She went everywhere alone, even on holidays' (*FLLR*, p. 63).[39]

Mistrust is the protagonist's basic orientation to himself and the world. Psychodynamic schools relate this to damage in the early oral phase. He has remained in the paranoid-schizoid position of infancy so that his reasoning and experience are grossly distorted by ideas of reference.[40] He can not empathise with or understand other people, so he has learned to avoid them. There is something bizarre in the fact that he has murdered Jane but expresses resentment about the suspicions that Charlie and the policemen display towards him. This is clear evidence of a split between the memories of his actions and the customary misinterpretations of reality typical of paranoid personalities.[41] There is no repression here. The memory of his meeting with Jane is clear and sequential. He plays it over in his mind and shares it with the reader in great detail. It simply exists in a dissociated part of his mind, quite unconnected with the knowledge that he has lied to the police. Equally chilling is the unusual

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[38] D. Winnicott emphasises the importance of this in his paper 'Mirror-role of Mother and Family in Child Development', in *Playing and Reality* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1974), pp. 130 - 138.

[39] Michael Rutter stresses the importance of imitative behaviour in *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1986), pp. 114 - 116.

[40] 'Ideas of reference' are often symptomatic of psychosis and are due to the interpreting of 'indifferent phenomena as though they had reference to oneself', Rycroft, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, p. 138.

[41] D. Winnicott explains emotional callousness in his paper 'The Development of the Capacity for Concern', in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment.*

combination of tenderness and callousness: 'I lifted her up gently, as gently as I could so as not to wake her and eased her quietly into the canal' (*FLLR*, p. 73).

He is an affectionless psychopath or a borderline psychotic. Bowlby has made an extensive study of affectionless psychopathy[42] and Winnicott of borderline psychosis.[43] They have provided persuasive evidence to show that these syndromes are caused by damage to attachment bonds in childhood, or gross disturbances in the early symbiotic relationship. Children who suffer repeated or prolonged separation from their mother, or another 'principal attachment object', go through a process of grief which moves through three stages: protest, despair and detachment. If the carer does not return, or is not adequately replaced by a mother substitute, before the stage of detachment is established, the child may never recover the ability to feel warmly towards anyone, or to make close relationships.[44] Superficial adjustment can be made to the expectations of others, but this hides a cold and callous unconcern. The mother need not be physically absent, it is sufficient that she be depressed or unable to love and respond warmly to the child for some reason of her own. In that case, affectional bonds are never made and the child grows up in cold detachment.

Jane is a deprived child.[45] What look like innocence and trustfulness are abnormal in latency period girls, who usually show marked xenophobia and are protected and supervised by adults. Jane hangs around the street, usually alone, and accosts strange men - following them around, asking personal questions and begging for toys and sweets.[46] This behaviour, which according to Bowlby's studies is typical of emotional deprivation, renders deprived children vulnerable to psychopaths like the protagonist. He, like Jane, longs for attention and physical contact but, unlike her, he has not learned to elicit it. Maurice Bridgeland found that the child molesters in his study:

> had very low self-esteem as a result of...repeated experiences of rejection and lacked any normal outlets for sexual feeling. They therefore over-reacted to any...advance - for example from younger children...and were themselves very vulnerable.[47]

The protagonist seems resigned to his isolation, unlike Jane, who initiates inappropriate contacts with strangers. When he meets her he confesses: 'I felt pleased that she was genuinely curious about me, and I was attracted to her. I wanted her to be my friend' (*FLLR*, p. 67). Interaction with her is a new experience. He is overwhelmed with physical sensations which he did not anticipate and has never

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[42] This is summarised by Michael Rutter in *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed*, pp 217 - 218.
[43] This is summarised by M. Davis and D. Wallbridge in *Boundary and Space: an Introduction to the Work of D.W. Winnicott* (London: Karnac, 1981), pp. 46 - 52.
[44] J. Bowlby describes this in 'Process of Mourning', *International Journal Psychoanalysis*, vol. 42 (1961), 317 - 40
[45] Emotional deprivation in children is described by many authorities, notably Davis and Wallbridge in *Boundary and Space: an Introduction to the Work of D.W. Winnicott*, pp. 78 - 81.
[46] Michael Rutter stresses the abnormality of this behaviour, in *Maternal Deprivation Reassessed*, p. 104.
[47] Maurice Bridgeland, 'Sexual Deviation' (transcript of lecture to Assoc. of Child Psychiatrists and Psychologists 1989), p. 2.

learnt to cope with. He feels 'a fist pushing against [his] ribs' (*FLLR*, p. 70) and experiences an erection together with an uncontrollable desire to be touched. He has no wish to hurt or abuse her, indeed he is not thinking of her at all. He becomes totally absorbed in his own reactions. This is not a sadistic murder. It is the action of a chronologically adult male with the emotional maturity of an infant who needs physical stimulation. Welldon points out that:

> In male perversion this profound split is between what the individual experiences as his anatomical maturity, and his mental representations of his body in which he sees himself as a raging and desperate baby. Hence, although he responds physically with a genital orgasm, the fantasies in his mind belong to pre-Oedipal stages.[48]

This protagonist perceives his orgasm in purely eliminative terms: 'I doubled up and came, I came into my cupped hands...All the time I spent by myself came pumping out, all the hours walking alone....Then I remembered the girl' (*FLLR*, p. 73). When he thinks back over the events of that day, he feels that he made the wrong choice between two opportunities. He drifts off into a fantasy of joining the boys who were playing football in the street, because that would have been a better game to play. There is no humour here and no relief. It is not a story about sex or the abuse of children so much as a story about the results of early emotional deprivation and the vulnerability of children, regardless of their chronological age.

The symbols are powerful and appropriate. Almost certainly, butterflies are a symbol straight from the unconscious. The word is often used to describe unpleasant sensations of anxiety and excitement, which are like a 'cold thrill in [the] stomach' (*FLLR*, p. 68). Butterflies are also the adult and sexual stage of a low form of life. Once the image becomes conscious in his mind, the protagonist realises at once: 'Butterflies could never survive near the canal' (*FLLR*, p. 69). Finally, the butterfly is a symbol of the psyche or soul (the anima). The symbols associated with Jane are 'a small, pink, naked doll' (*FLLR*, p. 68) and a solitary flower by the canal. Neither the doll nor the flower forms any part of Jane's fantasy or play.[49] She wants everything she sees until she gets it and then she loses interest in it. This sort of greed, which is impossible to satisfy, usually springs from early emotional deprivation. The doll and the flower are poignant symbols for the lifeless and discarded, needy and deprived child which Jane personifies and which matches the protagonist's equally deprived 'internalised child'. The other important symbol is water. Usually water is symbolic of life and birth or rebirth, but here it is the still and putrid water of death and decay. Even the tap water 'has been drunk five times before' (*FLLR*,

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[48] Estella Welldon, *Mother, Madonna, Whore* (London: Free Association Books, 1988), p. 8.

[49] D. Winnicott considers the inhibition of imaginative play as a very serious symptom of emotional disturbance. He discusses this in 'Playing: Creative Activity and the Search for the Self' in *Playing and Reality*, pp. 62 - 76.

p. 62). There are no hopeful symbols. The water is too polluted to sustain life, the factories are derelict, the library is closed and there are no butterflies.

A different psychopathology is found in 'Conversations with a Cupboard Man', the sixth story in the first collection, first published in *Transatlantic Review* for a fee of ten pounds. This was the first of McEwan's short stories to be published, written on the first evening of his postgraduate course. He told William Leith: 'Angus [Wilson] liked the nastiness. Malcolm [Bradbury] was pleased by the literary pastiche'.[50] Already a radio and stage play, this story has been filmed in Polish under the title *Rozmowy Z Czlowiekiem Z Szafy.* The narrator's insight is impressive and this makes him very different from the protagonist of 'Butterflies' or 'Homemade'. His father died before he was born and he 'had to be all the children [his mother] had ever wanted' (*FLLR*, p. 75). He describes a tight, symbiotic relationship which excluded everyone else and extended the very early post-natal phase, where mother and child are still psychologically one unit, until his late adolescence.[51] Mother's pathological need for an exclusive and intimate relationship may have been based on a narcissistic enjoyment of power or the need for completion of herself with a phallic object. Alternatively it could have been due to her inability to mourn and resolve her grief for her husband, so that she tried to make time stand still in order to avoid the next stage of development of her relationship with her son. Normally, six weeks after delivery, mothers begin to withdraw gradually from their symbiosis with the baby and return to an active relationship with their partners. The protagonist wasn't unhappy. His mother had given him all her time and attention, using him as a playmate as well as an object to meet her personal needs. According to Welldon, mothers who 'display perverse tendencies towards their offspring' first identify the baby as their 'missing phallus' and then their 'toy' or 'thing', the 'part-object' or 'transitional object' - something to be 'invented, manipulated, used and abused, ravaged and discarded, cherished and idealised, symbiotically identified with and de-animated all at once'.[52] Children, and especially babies, need a loving reflection in the mother's eyes to attain self-esteem. When the process is reversed, the child becomes responsible for mother's well-being by constantly confirming her as an essential being without whom life is unthinkable. This seems to have been the protagonist's role in his mother's life and he 'could have spent the whole of [his] life living [his] first two years over and over again' (*FLLR*, p. 76). Damaged though he is, he has been able to lay down basic trust and has integrated his body and

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[50] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 7.
[51] The stages of the move from absolute dependence towards independence are described, in detail, in Davis and Wallbridge, *Boundary and Space: an Introduction to the Work of D.W. Winnicott*, pp. 30 - 31.
[52] Welldon, *Mother, Madonna, Whore*, p. 72.

physical needs securely, so that when he has an opportunity, albeit fifteen years too late, to resume his development, he is able to do this reasonably successfully.[53] He is not paranoid, and is able to see that other people are entitled to their rights and satisfactions. However, four years in the facilitating environment of the adolescent unit does not suffice to catch up on fifteen years of life and twelve years of formal education: 'I have to pretend. All the things you take for granted I have to do it all consciously. I'm always thinking about it, like I was on the stage' (*FLLR*, p. 76). All children consolidate newly learned skills by embodying them in repetitive play and 'act as if' they were more mature than they are until the behaviour becomes easy. This narrator has learnt the early lessons, which form the foundation of the personality, well. The oral phase integrates any kind of 'getting' or 'taking in'. Libido is invested in the mouth, the skin (where stroking and cuddling are registered), and in the eyes and ears (which take in colours, shapes, sounds of music and voices). In this phase there are the satisfactions of eating, drinking, sucking, biting, chewing, smoking and talking (in the sense of speaking words rather than exchanging important information). Looking and listening as well as touching and being touched for pleasure also belong here. All seem readily available to this narrator.

Preparing and sharing food, and structuring other activities involving incorporation or sensory stimulation, form the main coin of social exchange. Giving generously and taking gratefully, exchanging spontaneously or sharing mutually, are the preferred activities from this position. These satisfactions are open to anyone who wishes to indulge in them since most people have enough libido invested in the oral zones to enjoy them. The 'oral character' indulges them to the exclusion of other satisfactions. This narrator has missed out on important life experiences but he is not hopelessly damaged, psychopathic or psychotic. Given a sufficiently supportive environment, he could make a reasonable life for himself, continue to grow emotionally and lead a useful existence.

His first experience of intentional cruelty occurs in his first job. The chief cook, 'Pus-face', chooses him as the butt of his sadistic jokes, but the protagonist does not have the victim mentality. His prolonged oral phase has left him with enough confidence to retaliate in self-defence. Although this is a particularly horrible act, it is not sadistic. It has the elements of a premeditated revenge in keeping with the primitive principles of justice which guide the immature superego. The castration involved does not seem to be related to any transference of Oedipal fantasies from mother's new husband to his boss but is rather a response to the latter's earlier attempts to roast him alive. The protagonist does not seem to

[53] Evidence of the possibility of making up for early deprivation, much later in life is discussed by A.M. Clarke and A.D.B. Clarke in *Early Experience: Myth and Evidence* (London: Open Books, 1976).

have reached the genital phase. His hatred of his stepfather is the fierce rage of the young toddler who is suddenly displaced from his position with mother and is not offered any compensatory satisfactions in relationship with the rival. His masturbation has a pre-Oedipal quality of self-comfort and a simple search for relief from tension: 'You ask me what I did when I saw this girl...I ran all the way back here, climbed inside [the cupboard] and tossed myself off...I felt better too...I unwound' (*FLLR*, p. 75). Here, a stimulus evokes a need, quickly and harmlessly satisfied in private. Unlike the protagonist in 'Butterflies', he is no stranger to physical satisfactions and is not overwhelmed. He can wait for an appropriate time and place to obey his impulses.

Alone in his cupboard he daydreams about 'being made to stay inside an oven' (*FLLR*, p. 83). The experience of being contained in a small, warm, dark place together with the restriction of movement symbolically recreates the situation with his mother who frustrated his wish for autonomy, kept him confined and stifled his development but gave him warmth, exclusive attention and care. Ovens are symbolic of the womb and the memory of his mother's efforts 'to push [him] back up her womb' (*FLLR*, p. 77) meet and mingle with his memories of 'the old days when [he] was with [his] mother....The old cotton-wool life when everything was done for [him], warm and safe' (*FLLR*, p. 82). Other symbols are depicted in his paintings:

> He told me to paint a picture of myself, and I painted these strange shapes in yellow and white. And after that my mother, and I made large red mouths all over the paper - that was her lipstick - and in the mouths I painted it black. (*FLLR*, p. 79)

He has not grown up to assume a fully human shape emotionally, but the colours are optimistic and cheerful. White symbolises innocence and purity, while yellow suggests life, light and a wish to make relationships, although it can also suggest fear.[54] Large red mouths which are black inside are symbolic of the mother's passion and need to psychologically 'eat him up' and kill his autonomy. The shops from which he steals can be seen as a store of food, available on demand; a more concrete symbol of the mother's breast than the great-grandfather's diaries in 'Solid Geometry', or the book shops in London in 'Homemade'.

This story 'is the hidden emotional history of many men, grotesquely caricatured as the confession of a madman' (*Ryan*, p. 8). He structures for himself an environment where his regression is accommodated in his daily life. Unlike David Lee in *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration*, or Charles Darke in *The Child in Time*, he has not found a woman prepared to mother him, so he leads a sad and

[54] Dr. Max Luscher has written at length about the symbolism of colour in *The Luscher Colour Test* (London: Pan Books, 1971).

solitary life, surrounded with symbols of the human relationship which he longs for. His massive regression to the oral phase, when he last felt safe, satisfied and loved, is entirely understandable.[55] This predicament is clearly illustrated in 'Dead as They Come'.

'Dead as They Come' is sometimes understood as dealing with 'simultaneous rape and murder'[56] - a scenario suggested by the title - or 'sex with a corpse',[57] but McEwan makes it clear that he intended the story to be taken at its face value. He recalls:

> Someone sent me just recently a cutting about a man who'd smashed down a shop front window and stolen a mannequin. The mannequin was discovered in a dustbin, chopped up and sexually assaulted.[58]

This fourth story in the second collection, first published in *Bananas* 1975, presents a protagonist whose 'predilection is for pleasure unmitigated by the yappings and whinings of the soul' (*IBS*, p. 63). At forty-five, he has no time for relationships. One day he is struck by the beauty of a mannequin in a shop window which becomes the focus of his erotic fantasies. He christens her Helen. He tries to maintain this relationship in an effort to gratify his impossible demands, which no living woman can satisfy. However this situation is not static but represents the first act of a life script, which moves on to include revenge for betrayal and abandonment in the anal or genital phase. The contract is: 'I'll love you, and give you everything, but you'll betray me and I'll punish you'. Many unconscious complexes are worked through in close relationships by projecting aspects of the inner life onto the partner and coming to see that they do not fit in the 'here and now' but were real and painful at some stage in childhood.

The mechanism of projection is sometimes likened to the hanging of a complex onto a hook or coat-hanger and this is a concrete representation of it. He decides: 'She had been a virgin, now she was a demanding lover. She demanded the orgasm I could not give her, she would not let me go, she would not permit me to rest' (*IBS*, p. 67). This insatiable desire attributed to women reappears in Colin's fantasy about Mary in *The Comfort of Strangers*, and he too deals with it by the use of an inanimate object. The reader is reminded of McEwan's imaginative childhood games:

> In the hours I played alone, I developed powerful relationships with inanimate objects. Once, a kite I had built refused to fly. I took it to my bedroom, laid it on the bed and, addressing it in my mind, tried to persuade it of the great pleasures of flight. I gave it one last chance. However, out in the garden it refused to go and I beat it to shreds with a broom, then forgave it and buried it.[59]

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[55] D. Winnicott regards regression as an attempt at self-healing as described in his paper: 'Metapsychological and Clinical Aspects of Regression' in *Collected Papers: Through Paediatrics to Psycho-Analysis* (London: Hogarth, 1975).
[56] Kemp, 'Hounding the Innocent', p. 11.
[57] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.
[58] *Ibid.*

Sometimes men project wished-for qualities onto women who are passive or depressed, but this merely prolongs the period of their infatuation. Eventually something of the real personality shows through to contradict the fantasy. Mutual projection, of idealised images of the opposite sex onto the partner, is a normal part of the early experience of falling in love but this seldom lasts beyond the honeymoon. In Helen, the protagonist has an object which promises to carry his projections for ever. True to his conviction that 'nothing lasts' (*IBS*, p. 71), he soon feels himself completely at her mercy: 'I seemed a roast on a spit which Helen turned with a free hand' (*IBS*, p. 74). The narrator is stuck in the anal phase and makes a success of his business because of his drive for power, control and hoarding of money.[60] Disappointment and frustration are dealt with by projecting blame and exacting revenge on the object of his projection. The climax of his relationship with Helen gives him an opportunity to release repressed jealousy and rage, which have accumulated in the unconscious and prevent progress. His script begins with an intense infatuation, followed by growing suspicions of infidelity and eventually coldness and rejection, culminating in rape and murder. Elements of this must have increasingly surfaced in his earlier relationships with women since he had 'been married three times...each marriage lasting, in chronological order, eight, five and two years' (*IBS*, p. 62). While pieces of this script can be acted out with different people at different times, the phenomenon of closure[61] demands that the whole script be enacted from start to finish in order to live out the repressed trauma and inhibited fury. It is merciful that he chooses a doll and not a human being to promote his cure.

'Cocker at the Theatre', the fourth story in the first collection, first published in *Time Out*, resembles 'Dead as They Come' in that the main characters, Jasmine and Dale, treat the extras and actors in their theatre as if they were mere bodies. They have the illusion of complete control of the expression of their fantasy: 'She did not speak to them, she took them by the elbow, leading them from this place to that place. They could not see her eyes through her glasses and they did not always know what she wanted' (*FLLR*, p. 57). This story is seldom referred to by either McEwan or his critics. There is no unnamed narrator and no authorial intrusion. The reader is presented with a rehearsal of 'the copulation scene' enacted by a chorus of naked actors to 'soaring violins and a military band'

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[59] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.

[60] The anal character is formed when the oral phase has been negotiated satisfactorily but progress to the genital phase is blocked, or difficult, so that fixation in the anal phase, or massive regression to it, takes place. The traits of obstinacy, orderliness, a need for routine and parsimony, or their precise opposites, pliancy, untidiness, generosity and fecklessness distinguish this personality. Both of these tendencies can exist at different times and appear under different circumstances. The 'obsessional neurosis' is a pathological intensification of the obsessional character traits.

[61] J. Fagan and U.L. Shepherd explain this phenomenon as the need to finish a behavioural sequence before freedom from it's power can be secured in *Gestalt Therapy Now: Theory, Techniques, Applications* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

(*FLLR*, p. 56). The cast are crippled by embarrassment and cowed into submission by the director. The depersonalisation implied in the use of the body as an object for scopophilic satisfactions is depicted here. Jasmine's effeminate manner and ambivalent attitude to sex hint at voyeuristic tendencies which he hopes to share with the audience. Mr. Cleaver is a particularly apt name for him, as it suggests castration. Cocker's refusal to be shamed or put-down deprives Jasmine of his power, which depends on the passive acquiescence of the cast. Defiance renders him impotent. It is easy to find this story funny, because the victims are not helpless children but adults in search of easy money and the suffering inflicted is slight. McEwan may have come across domineering directors in his days as an extra on films and is not immune himself to the readiness to depersonalise and symbolically dismember persons in the service of his art. About his abortive dramatisation of *Solid Geometry* he said:

> Mary Maddox was to have played the scene naked...From the point of view of dramatic effectiveness discretion here was our best option; to have allowed the camera to have become a *voyeur*, to have introduced at the climax of the play the self-consciousness of pornography, would have been completely diversionary. (*IG*, p. 14)

As Kiernan Ryan has said: 'The reification of women by the male gaze and the petrifaction of life in even great art may not be unrelated, involving as they both do the aesthetic reduction of the vital to an inert commodity' (*Ryan*, p. 16).

The stories dealt with so far are connected by the theme of madness and/or badness in various forms. They have the quality of nightmares, relieved occasionally by cruel humour. Archetypal symbols abound and primary process thinking is in evidence, as are the early defence mechanisms of splitting, projective identification and acting out. The pattern of a blissful infancy, a free and undisciplined toddler-hood and problems in the phallic phase underlie the personality structure of many of the characters, and difficulties in resolving the Oedipus complex are met with repeatedly. Many of the protagonists are loners and their inner life preoccupies them, so that they are unable to make satisfactory relationships in the 'here and now' with real people. Intrapsychic models serve best to explain them.

Chapter 3 - In Search of Integration

> the psychoanalytic aim is to observe the shadowy presentations - whether in the form of images or of feelings - that are spontaneously evolved in the unconscious psyche and appear without his bidding to the man who looks within. In this way we find once more things that we have repressed or forgotten. Painful though it may be, this is in itself a gain - for what is inferior or even worthless belongs to me as my shadow and gives me substance and mass. How can I be substantial if I fail to cast a shadow? I must have a dark side also if I am to be whole... (*MM*, p. 40)

Whereas the stories dealt with in chapter 2 seem like 'tiny scattered islands' (*MM*, p. 242) of psychopathology, those in chapter 3 are like 'the peaks of submarine mountain ranges' (*MM*, p. 242), revealing the submerged complexes which rest firmly on the archetypes. What might have been anecdotal tales of accidental pregnancy, sad sexual abuse or unrequited love in the lives of individual characters now become an opportunity for the reader to get in touch with the universal hero myth or come face-to-face with the 'Terrible Mother'.

McEwan may have used his early fiction to dramatise his own difficulties. He told Megan Tresidder: 'I think...that I had been very repressed, intense and intensely shy, cripplingly self-conscious, and some time in my early twenties I let go'.[1] Not that 'letting go' involved acting out on any grand scale. He assured Alan Franks: 'none of the episodes in the writing had anything to do with my own days, my own life, how I conducted myself. I'm sure it would all have yielded very well to analysis'.[2] Instead, he used his writing to promote healing:

> the stories were part of a private, personal awakening from a long sleep of unhappiness throughout my adolescence. I had not so much thrown off that unhappiness as confronted it...I found that I could dramatise these...things, these concepts within my own heart, in a very displaced way.[3]

The characters illustrate Freud's dictum that 'whatever is not understood must be repeated'.[4] McEwan speaks about 'tiny bits of oneself going into unsympathetic characters' (*NI*, p. 189). The mental mechanisms of defence used to keep these 'tiny bits' out of his real life went into them too. It is the depiction of these defences, rather than the perverted behaviour they result in, that compels the reader's identification.

The stories discussed in chapter 2 are linked by their portrayals of intrapsychic pathology, while chapter 3 deals with distorted inter-personal relationships. There is a recognition that sex is

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[1] Tresidder, 'The Dreamer Who Creates Nightmares', p. 2.
[2] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] The repetition compulsion is a process whereby an individual places himself again and again in painful and distressing situations, unaware of his own contribution to bringing them about, as a defence against remembering the original trauma. This concept is discussed by Freud in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1926)*, Standard Edition, vol. 20 (London: Hogarth Press, 1959).

related to love and procreation and implies a need for an adult identity in which the role of parent has an important place. This realisation, absent in the stories analysed earlier, replaces the characters' totally egocentric attitudes and drives (to get, to have, to spoil, to control and to intrude) typical of oral, anal and early phallic phases, with generative phase concerns of support, protection and nurturing of dependants. Mad parents, bad parents, dead or divorced parents, absent parents and substitute parents are described with McEwan's special gift of starkly realistic observation and acute emotional insight, as are the adolescents and adults not yet ready to be parents. The themes of lost parents, unwanted children and unresolved grief loom large in McEwan's work and are taken up in greater depth in his novels. Here, they emerge partly formed, like the snatches of a tune belonging to a later symphony.

'Last Day of Summer' is the third story in the first collection, first published in *American Review* in February 1975. Here, the parents are dead and their influence absent in day-to-day living. McEwan admits to wishful fantasies about having no parents, only siblings and especially sisters (*NI*, p. 171). The story is presented in flashbacks[5] of catastrophic events. The protagonist, aged twelve, is introduced to Jenny by first hearing her laugh: 'It's a girl's laugh, a young woman's, short and nervous like laughing at nothing funny' (*FLLR*, p. 41). On seeing her, he registers that she is 'this fat woman, or girl...She's so fat her arms can't hang right from her shoulders' (*FLLR*, p. 41). The uncertainty about Jenny's age and therefore her role is significant, because in many ways she is a woman and carer, while in other ways she is an infant identified with Alice. She thus represents both sides of the relationship between mother and baby. Her obesity gives her a baby shape, which reduces her sexual attractiveness. Kate is attractive - she likes 'dressing-up and going out, or talking for hours on the telephone' (*FLLR*, p. 43). She is in the heterosexual phase of late adolescence, and not ready to settle down to motherhood and domesticity.

The protagonist is in the latency period and has only vague ideas about his future. He longs for a permanent, loving relationship but has no overt sexual preoccupations. He has 'a rowing boat, green on the outside and red on the inside like a fruit' (*FLLR*, p. 46). This is a mother symbol and like a transitional object,[6] helps him to both remember and forget his mother. He warms to Jenny, who is organised without being controlling and who takes on domestic responsibilities for the whole commune: 'Its hard to say exactly when Jenny becomes Alice's mother. At first she's just looking after her while

[5] In addition to being a popular strategy in literature and film, the flashback is established in psychiatry as a common symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder and is well described in case histories of victims of sexual abuse and severe trauma.

[6] A 'transitional object' is an object which the subject treats as something half-way between himself and another person, typically a doll or piece of cloth which a child treasures and uses as a comforter.

Kate visits friends' (*FLLR*, p. 50). Gradually Kate stays away for longer and longer intervals, and eventually: 'Alice starts crying upstairs and shouting for Jenny. Jenny and Kate both look up at once and stare at each other...Jenny gets up and squeezes past Kate at the door' (*FLLR*, p. 51). This is very different from the phallic competitions enacted by boys. Kate does not want Alice and meets her needs with reluctance. Alice becomes attached to Jenny, who is prepared to defend the relationship in a genuinely maternal way. Rivalry for the love of a child is a common theme and 'real' and 'foster-mothers' often damage the child by their claims to primacy. Solomon's judgement would here come down in favour of Jenny, but there are hints that Kate is pursuing a relationship with a man outside the commune and may move away, taking Alice with her. A warm and mutual, equal status relationship quickly develops between the protagonist and Jenny. The others soon take her domestic services for granted and feel free to make fun of her behind her back, calling her 'Slim Jim' (*FLLR*, p. 50). In this she is reminiscent of Lulu, the denigrated and exploited fat schoolgirl in 'Homemade', who also goes by the nickname of 'Lulu Slim' (*FLLR*, p. 28). Whereas Lulu becomes a sex object and a whore, Jenny becomes a virgin mother. Girls who have been sexually abused in their childhood often become either promiscuous or very fat and unattractive to avoid sexual advances in adult life.[7]

The protagonist, Jenny and Alice are in some ways like a restructured family with no clear definition of roles and without the vital ingredients of sex and security. The protagonist is arguably the most mature of the three of them. He is well established in the depressive position, has negotiated the early stages successfully and arrived safely in the latency period before he was orphaned. He has postponed grief but has not regressed. When he shows Jenny a photograph of his parents and she remarks that his mother looks like a 'very nice woman', he realises the extent of his denial of her death:

> suddenly I see my mother as just a woman in a picture, it could be any woman, and for the first time she's far off, not in my head looking out, but outside my head being looked at by me, Jenny or anyone who picks up the photo. (*FLLR*, p. 48)

It sometimes happens after a bereavement that the lost person is experienced as being inside oneself. This holds back the pain of loss and loneliness, but arrests the process of mourning.

Alice is a baby and needs a level of maternal preoccupation which Jenny supplies unconditionally. There is no adult to meet Jenny's needs. Mothers of young children need support for themselves and the traditional roles of the father and grandmother are important here. Jenny's obesity, nervousness and acceptance of her denigrated role in the commune, reflect her unhappiness and low

[7] Bridgeland and Kohut take issue with Freud about the idea that narcissism is the opposite of altruism and claim that self-esteem has a separate developmental path, unrelated to sexuality and instinct which aims at the development of identity. Based on this model, the members of the commune are in search of identity while Jenny exhibits what Kohut would have described as 'a narcissistic wound'.

self-esteem. A common but ultimately hopeless way of dealing with emotional deprivation is to give to others what one needs urgently for one's self. The protagonist and Alice value and respond to Jenny. The threat of their loss precipitates her into depression and despair, which she tries to hold back by the 'manic defence'.[8] She idealises their relationship: 'She makes it sound really great, much better than it was...And then Jenny says, "And tomorrow you put on your red cap and go to school"...We start laughing and it seems like we're never going to stop' (*FLLR*, p. 54). The manic mood is infectious and, as repression is lifted from emotions, the underlying pain and sadness threaten to come into consciousness. Alice, sensitive like all babies to the real feelings behind adult defences, starts to cry and 'that makes us laugh more' (*FLLR*, p. 54). If they had both joined Alice in her crying, some authentic grief might have been expressed and the process of mourning for their separate losses might have become established. Instead, Jenny and the protagonist cling to their spurious hilarity.

There is genuine sadness in this story, because both Jenny and the protagonist need and are capable of real love. They accept, understand and support each other but the relationship is of necessity platonic and temporary. The commune contains no-one who can provide Jenny with a secure situation in which she can work through her complexes or to act as a parent to her needy internalised child. Kiernan Ryan has added an extra dimension to the interpretation of this story:

> Lurking beneath the surface of the story is a sinister matricidal fantasy, cleansed of the guilt which would cling to the wilful murder of an actual mother...Becoming masculine means a murderous denial of the dependency and need for intimacy evoked by the mother and the female body. (*Ryan*, p. 8)

The theme of parenting is also central to 'First Love, Last Rites' which is the seventh story in the first collection, giving its title to McEwan's first book. The narrator is seventeen years old, has left school and home and cohabits in a bed-sitting room with Sissel. This is one of McEwan's favourite stories and he regards it as a story about pregnancy and the power of women (*NI*, p. 172). It seems macabre, however, that this power should have been revealed in such revolting circumstances, as the climax towards which the whole narrative has been building:

> Sissel knelt by the rat, Adrian and I stood behind her like guards...She parted the gash in the mother rat with her forefinger and thumb, pushed the bag back inside and closed the blood-spiked fur over it. (*FLLR*, p. 98)

This catharsis relieves tension and the couple make love again. To this symbolic renewal the narrator finally says 'yes'. McEwan had been impressed by the end of *Ulysses* and wanted to write a story

[8] Manic defence is the expression of emotion which is inappropriate to the situation and often the opposite of the 'real' emotion, for example laughter instead of tears, or elation instead of depression. It is commonly used to fend off anxiety, despair or guilt. The term was coined by Fairbairn.

which ended with the word 'yes'. His 'problem was how to get to this "yes". The problem almost preceded the content' and he describes his 'astonishment at the sensational copy reviewers made out of the stories. Reviewers seemed to be fixated by things that weren't central' (*NI*, p. 172). However, readers may be tempted to agree with the reviewers when they read descriptions, central or not, like the following:

> I stood over the rat and prodded it gently with the poker. It rolled on its side, and from the mighty gash which ran its belly's length there obtruded and slid partially free from the lower abdomen a translucent purple bag, and inside five pale crouching shapes, their knees drawn up around their chins. As the bag touched the floor I saw a movement, the leg of one unborn rat quivered as if in hope, but the mother was hopelessly dead... (*FLLR*, p. 98)

It is possible that McEwan does not feel much for animals nor used to keep beloved rats, cats or birds as pets in childhood. This, like the casual mention of Raymond's exploits in Finsbury Park in 'Homemade' or the description in 'Butterflies' of the boys preparing to roast a live cat, is essentially unnecessary to the plot but serves to horrify and sicken the reader and contributes heavily to the 'gut reaction' against his writing. The killing of the rat is not gratuitous like the other examples mentioned because 'the rat is acknowledged as their 'familiar" (*Ryan*, p. 9) and McEwan demonstrates 'its consanguinity with its killers' (*Ryan*, p. 10).

In the early stories the material seems to surface from McEwan's unconscious, clothing itself with symbols and images on its way. It is projected into the reader without apparently ringing alarm bells in McEwan himself, unless it is argued that he does this advisedly - something he is at pains to deny. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of his later work deals consciously and specifically with sado-masochism. Anyone who can describe the roasting alive of animals 'in innocent bliss worthy of the 'Prelude" (*FLLR*, p. 28) has a very wide split between his sadistic fantasy and his sophisticated and cultured consciousness. Nor is this really funny - it simply produces a nasty shock. There is a threshold beyond which irony turns into pain. At this stage, unconscious contents from the early phases of development appear undigested and unassimilated in his writing. As he says:

> when you concentrate on that sort of trivial puzzle you find yourself drawing quite freely and unconsciously on surprising material...One doesn't think about symbols, though there comes a time when one can't deny that they are there. (*NI*, p. 172)

The setting of this story is very different from the derelict and polluted environment of 'Butterflies'. There are cooling breezes and fresh air. There is an abundance of fish in the sea and even the river mud contains eels. The water, which here symbolises the unconscious, contains life and hope. The wider human environment affords helpful figures who offer much needed advice but do not impinge

or interfere: 'The fishermen were friendly and amused. There's eels down there, they said...they shrugged in a good-natured way and showed me a better way to lash the net to the hoops' (*FLLR*, p. 89). Decay is restricted to the immediate human environment and is directly related to the apathy into which the protagonist and Sissel have sunk: 'By mid-July we were not so happy in our room, there was a growing dishevelment and unease' (*FLLR*, p. 91). They are careless about contraception and undecided about who should take responsibility for this, or indeed for any other, aspect of their lives. They live close to Sissel's family, which is in the process of disintegration:

> Sissel's parents after twenty-seven years of marriage and six children hated each other with sour resignation, they could no longer bear to live in the same house. The father moved out to a hostel a few streets away... (*FLLR*, p. 89)

Sissel's father is an ageing businessman, who has been made redundant and meets the protagonist in the pub, where he holds forth at length about his past in the Korean war. He treats this boy as an equal and business partner and makes no comment about his cohabiting with his daughter in insecure and unsuitable conditions. He is like a middle-aged adolescent without any sense of responsibility. He is unable or unwilling to exercise care or control over his ten-year-old son, Adrian, who has been abandoned to 'the misery of his disintegrating home' (*FLLR*, p. 88) and who expresses his distress in over-active behaviour. Adrian needs attention, direction and firm handling which no-one gives him. He tries to create with the protagonist the male bond he longs for with his father: 'When he locked his forearms round Sissel's neck...his eyes were on me for encouragement, he thought the real bond was between us, the two men against the girl' (*FLLR*, p. 92). Like the commune in 'Last Day of Summer', this dysfunctional family has no adequate parent figures and resembles a badly organised children's home from which adolescents like the father and Sissel escape prematurely without a firm preparation for their future.

The protagonist seems to have negotiated the early stages and is in the throes of working through the residual problems left over from the end of the genital phase, with its dim awareness of procreation. Both he and Sissel are new to love and sex and, at first, this seems to be a unique and totally satisfying experience, which provides the answer to every problem. Into this paradise of innocence and freedom the protagonist's unconscious introduces the fantasy of 'the creature' which lives in the dark, probably in Sissel's womb. He connects it with small scrabbling noises and suffers 'what seemed like crimes in [his] head while [he and Sissel] fucked' (*FLLR*, p. 88). He is not ready to be a father, but associates the creature in his mind with 'eggs, sperms, chromosomes, feathers, gills, claws'

(*FLLR*, p. 90). The fantasy of embryonic life is not uncommon when the genital phase moves into the generative mode. When the reality of the procreative function of sexuality is apprehended, there is some return to the incorporative mode of the oral phase with the role reversal which projects hunger and need into another being, while accepting the feeding and caring roles. This normally happens in women who abandon the phallic quest by projecting it into the male partner and identifying with him, while the male projects the generative role into the female partner and identifies with her. The role division of future parenting, dictated by biology, supports long-term pairing, because each partner feels the other to be the different but essential half of himself or herself, powerfully expressed by the following:

> In those careless fractions of a second I abandoned my life to feeding the creature, whatever it was, in or out of the womb, to fucking only Sissel, to feeding more creatures, my whole life given over to this in a moment's weakness. (*FLLR*, p. 90)

Fantasies of feeding the foetus, or the female, with the ejaculate are a concrete representation of the symbolic role of the male to nourish and protect his family. T. Brazelton and B. Cramer quote James Herzog, who found that some expectant fathers, whom he labelled 'attuned', acknowledged their feelings about the arrival of the baby by becoming 'empathetic' with and 'invested in' their wives. These men felt 'compelled, towards the end of the first trimester, to feed - in fantasy - the mother and the fetus. Making love was imagined as a form of nutriment to their pregnant wives, and somehow nurturing the growing fetus'.[9]

The protagonist is struggling with considerable ambivalence about this. The relationship between himself and Sissel begins to deteriorate in parallel with the growing evidence that simple spontaneous satisfactions and unlimited freedom are not sufficient to maintain a reasonable life-style, while controls and routines cannot be mutually agreed because the partners have not found a way to communicate. He feels helplessly trapped 'like an eel' (*FLLR*, p. 90) in the archetypal process of generation and is unable to work out his own individual life-style. It is as if someone has to die before the final 'yes' can be said to life and love. Haffenden suggests that in this story: 'the characters [are] purging themselves of false images of an as yet unsatisfactory relationship' (*NI*, p. 172). He does not explain why the purging should require the death of a pregnant rat. Kiernan Ryan explains the significance of these events: 'The scene also involves another displaced murder of the mother, here transformed into a version vile enough to licence her extermination by the adolescent male' (*Ryan*, p.

[9] T. Berry Brazelton, and B.G. Cramer, *The Earliest Relationship* (London: Kamac Books, 1991), p. 37.

10).[10] In the story itself, the protagonist is enmeshed in the fantasy of enslavement by the archetype of the 'Great Mother' which he projects onto Sissel: 'To me Sissel was right inside the process, she *was* the process and the power of its fascination grew' (*FLLR*, p. 90). The creature is intimately involved with this. No individual woman can represent the archetypal feminine for long and the protagonist withdraws this projection from Sissel when he sees her as one inconspicuous woman among a crowd of working women, coming out of the factory. This leaves the creature to carry the projection alone. He is acutely aware of its teeth, and imagines that it intends to attack him:

> I glanced down and saw my pale bare feet and saw a ghost rat's teeth bared and tearing nail from flesh...The frenzied rat was running through the gap, it was running at my feet to take its revenge. Like the ghost rat its teeth were bared. (*FLLR*, p. 97)

The rat is now identified with the Terrible Mother who is the sarcophagus (flesh-eater) and giver of life together, who must be killed to allow the hero to use his consciousness to overcome the power of the unconscious. Once the rat is dead, the good side of the archetype can be projected onto Sissel once more and the protagonist experiences this as 'a sure sense of the girl's power as she kneels by a dead rat' (*NI*, p. 172). The return of the eel to the river symbolises the return of phallic fantasies into the unconscious which leaves Sissel and the protagonist free to use their rational minds and engage their positive feelings without contamination by unconscious, primitive images.

'To and Fro', the seventh story in the second collection, first published in *The New Review*, offers a different image of the 'eternal feminine'. Here too the woman has some of the timeless archetypal quality projected onto Sissel. She belongs to the darkness, the night, the unconsciousness of sleep. She symbolises the universal procreative power. She seems complete in herself, encompassing the home and her sleeping children. The protagonist does not belong to this peaceful unit and is troubled with anxiety and tension. When asked for clarification of this prose poem McEwan replied: 'It's fairly simple really. A man lying in bed beside his lover, imagining himself at work, pursued by a colleague who seems to crowd in on his identity' (*NI*, p. 172). 'To and Fro' seems in some parts to refer to sexual activity and in others to the woman's heartbeat or breathing. This can be interpreted as the universal rhythm of life, encompassing the tides and other diurnal swings of natural forces. By comparison with the reality represented by the woman, the male world of work seems cold, compulsive, hostile, impersonal and futile. There are premonitions of the question 'shall there be womanly times or

[10] Jung, in *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), and Neumann, in *The Great Mother* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), elaborate on the significance of the 'hero myth' which is a theme that can be traced through ancient and modern mythologies and religions, as well as fairytales. The hero is symbolic for consciousness and his legendary deeds are an effort to free himself from the monster which represents the unconscious.

shall we die?' from the oratorio: 'In McEwan's fiction, relationships work to their best advantage when there is an equal give and take, a natural, rhythmic 'to and fro' between the partners' (*Slay*, p. 63).

'Two Fragments: March 199-' resembles 'To and Fro' in its lack of continuity and plot, but there are even closer links between this and *The Child in Time*. They appear as the sixth and seventh pieces in the second collection and were originally published separately, 'Saturday' under the title 'Without Blood' in *Encounter*, August 1975 and 'Sunday' as 'Sunday, March 3rd 1991' in *Harpers/Queen*, February 1977. Both fragments are set in a London of the foreseeable future after an environmental disaster. Against a background of poverty and squalor, the reader is offered scenes from a tender relationship between a single father and his three year old daughter.[11] Henry has a part-time relationship with Diane, an older woman who is his lover but neither a partner and cohabitee nor the mother of his child.

A preoccupation with smells, excrement and sadistic behaviour is again in evidence. These stand out more starkly because there is no context to fit them into and the reader is given a direct experience of torture through disgusting or brutal imagery:

> Glancing warily at her pursuer, she gathered up as much of her excrement as she could find and withdrew to a treetop where she could eat in comfort. From the end of her finger she fed small amounts to the baby. (*IBS*, p. 55)

The image of eating excrement is taken up again when a human family offer Henry a share of their meal: 'In a large quantity of clear hot water several dun-coloured globes, partially submerged, drifted and collided noiselessly..."What is it?" [he asked]. "It's muck", she said..."It's *piss*"' (*IBS*, p. 60). There is a remarkable similarity between the sadistic behaviour of people and animals:

> the man ordered the girl...into the centre of the circle...The crowd was silent, anxious to miss nothing....she raised the point of the sword...urged on by her father, [she] pushed the tip of the sword half an inch into her belly... (*IBS*, p. 49)

Public bullying and inflicting fear, pain and injury are repeated in the zoo:

> The shouts were for a powerful, bad-tempered male, the cage patriarch, who was terrorising the other chimpanzees. They scattered before him...Now all that remained was...an elderly mother...round whose belly clung a baby chimpanzee (*IBS*, p. 54)

There may be some intention to equate the degraded human behaviour in this decaying city with the abnormal and perverted existence of animals in a zoo. True to modern life, both human and chimpanzee parents continue to breed in spite of the appalling over-crowding and lack of hope for the future. Jonathan Raban observes that McEwan's adolescents: 'are endlessly curious about the world,

[11] In defiance of Freud's theories of female sexuality, Marie declares 'I've got a vagina', a propos of nothing at all. McEwan may be making a feminist rebuttal of these theories, which stress the 'castration complex' and 'penis envy' as essential components of female psychology.

but their curiosity has the roving neutrality of creatures in a zoo, unsure of what to focus on'.[12]

Another story where McEwan links humans and chimpanzees is 'Reflections of a Kept Ape', the second story in the second collection, first published in *New Republic* November 1976 (later reprinted in *The New Review*) and written after McEwan's move to London from Norwich. Here he introduces a couple where the male is an ape and the female is human. The issue of procreation is dealt with very differently here. Sally Klee is responsible for contraception and the protagonist understands and accepts that there is no question of intercourse when her 'intriguing cap [lies] inside its plastic oyster, dusted' (*IBS*, p. 33). The deliberate sterility of the relationship is reflected in Sally Klee's blocked creativity, with infertility as the subject of her only novel. In his reminiscences about the origins of his stories, McEwan recalled that in 1975 he had a conversation with Hamilton about 'the difficulties writers face with their second books'.[13] *First Love, Last Rites* had been accepted for publication at this time and 'Reflections of a Kept Ape' suggested itself after this exchange.

The protagonist may be understood as an adult man who feels himself reduced to the status of an ape. Questions like 'was this how one species in its arrogance treated another?' (*IBS*, p. 37) may have a basis in class, cultural or racial differences.[14] McEwan can also be saying that men and women are so different, that they may as well belong to different species. Finally there is the narrator's vivid memory from his earliest infancy: 'I am staring at my mother who squats with her back to me...I see past her shoulder...pale, spectral figures beyond the plate glass' (*IBS*, p. 41). This could be a cage in a zoo, but the image could also recall an incubator in a premature babies' nursery or a cubicle in a hospital for infectious diseases. The protagonist may have been confined in such an environment beyond the 'sensitive period'[15] for attachment or long enough to break such attachment bonds as he had made. So, like the protagonist in 'Butterflies', he remained in cold detachment until his frozen emotions[16] were thawed by his infatuation with Sally Klee. She came to represent the source of all that was good in life. Fromm describes a personality structure he labels 'automation conformity', which he regards as a form of escape from the isolation and anxiety of aloneness by ceasing to be oneself and developing a pseudo-self, in keeping with the demands and expectations of others. This leaves the

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[12] Jonathan Raban, 'Exiles: New Fiction', *Encounter 44*, no 6 (June 1975), p. 81.
[13] McEwan, 'Wild Man of Literature (c 1976)', p. 16.
[14] Fromm makes the point that for the authoritarian personality 'differences, whether of sex or race, are...necessary signs of superiority or inferiority', Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 149.
[15] During the sensitive periods, attachment bonds are made easily. If this time is missed only shallow and insecure bonds are made. This is discussed at length by Bowlby in *Attachment and Loss*.
[16] B. Dockar-Drysdale (a specialist in the in-patient treatment of very damaged children) has described 'frozen children' who react to emotional trauma by withdrawal and can spend years in cold detachment but can 'thaw' in treatment, by making new , intense, emotional attachments. This is discussed at length in *Therapy in Child Care* (London: Longmans, Green, 1968).

individual in an intense state of anxiety if there is no-one to tell him 'who to be' or 'what to do'. Constant recognition and approval are needed to bolster the pseudo-self. His acceptance of his degraded position in their relationship shows his lack of a stable core of personality. He can not exist, except as an appendage to her will. His penis, which is all that she seems to have valued about him, has lost the power to fertilise her fantasy and his habitual clowning games no longer make her laugh. The symbol of the plate glass,[17] separating him from human contact, is recreated in her ignoring of his existence. He attached himself to Sally Klee at 'a time of remote and singular optimism' (*IBS*, p. 27). Since then, she has fallen into a depression during which she is unable to write or even take any interest in her surroundings. She is too deeply sunk in her own misery to notice that she is living with a psychotic and there settles between them a 'pregnant silence' (*IBS*, p. 30), from which nothing can be born. McEwan, who thought that 'Solid Geometry' was funny, may well have intended this story to be funny too. However, the sadness and the deep sense of loss - 'because I *am* invisible and of no account' (*IBS*, p. 40) - is so poignant that it is hard to laugh at the ape-man and impossible to laugh with him. In his interview with Megan Tresidder, McEwan said:

> I had been invisible to myself in my teens. A lot of my terror of things were in these stories - my terror of not making full or rich emotional relationships, a lot of the loneliness of my teenage years.[18]

It is this feeling, rather than the satire, which moves the reader in this story: 'What we are pointing and mouthing at is a bizarre cartoon of a stock romantic predicament, which turns the ghostly spectator into the creature in the cage' (*Ryan*, p. 17). Put another way: 'His memory of the zoo...serves more appropriately as a metaphor not for his ape-hood but for his imprisonment - by love, by relationships, by life' (*Slay*, p. 55).

The relationship between artistic creativity, pregnancy, birth and rebirth is condensed here as are the issues of voluntary sterility, infertility and abstinence from sex to avoid parenthood. Creation and procreation are linked in the unconscious and when blocked they seem to rob sex of fascination and meaning leaving empty, hopeless repetition. If an instinctual process is arrested at any point in a preordained sequence of stages, there is stagnation, or a need to start again at the beginning:

> Every day for months on end she sits at her typewriter, waiting. But for a sudden flurry of activity at the end of each day her machine is silent. She cannot remember how she wrote her first book, she does not depart from what she knows, she does not dare repeat herself. (*IBS*, p. 28)

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[17] The 'glass wall effect' is a common description of the inaccessibility of the psychotic.
[18] Tresidder, 'The Dreamer Who Creates Nightmares', p. 2.

'A naked woman kneels, face buried in hands, amidst a barren desert' (*IBS*, p. 28), on the cover of Sally's book, symbolising this predicament.

Sexual identity problems are explored again in even greater depth in 'Disguises', the last story in the first collection, first published in *American Review*. There are echoes of 'Cocker at the Theatre' and the cupboard man's mother in the preoccupation with narcissism related to drama and the use of another person's body for perverted sexual satisfactions. The variations on the family theme consist of an absent father, a mother who died when the main character, Henry, was ten years old and a 'surreal mother' (*FLLR*, p. 100), Mina, mother's sister, who gives this 'only child' a home. Henry is approximately the same age as Adrian in 'First Love, Last Rites', and the narrator of 'Last Day of Summer'. Significantly, all three are around the age at which McEwan was sent away to boarding school when their lives change suddenly and completely. Henry's old life must have been 'good enough'[19] to allow for healthy progress through the early developmental stages and he is safely established in the latency period. Throughout the narrative he speaks of his mother only once: 'her image six months on was elusive like a faint star' (*FLLR*, p. 101). Henry does not mourn for his mother. It is not unusual for children to experience or exhibit no grief after bereavement until very much later in their adult life, when they can develop a severe depressive reaction to sometimes quite minor losses. In the meantime, the image of the dead parent is kept alive in the unconscious, sometimes symbolised by a transitional object, and can be evoked in times of distress.

Henry's aunt Mina persuades herself that she gave up her career to devote herself to her orphaned nephew. This capacity for self-deception and play-acting is the main characteristic of Mina's personality. She acts herself from morning till night and has a pressing need for an admiring audience. Henry fits conveniently into this role and provides her with supporting roles and audience participation. It is not until she wants him to wear a girl's party dress and wig that he rebels.

It is possible to speculate that Mina's sense of identity was damaged early. Her skill and talent are in the service of her infantile omnipotence and primitive rage is aroused in her by any thwarting of her wishes. Such a severe narcissistic wound may stem from sexual abuse in the pre-pubertal phases. Child molesters have commonly experienced abuse in their own childhood and Mina, like the protagonist in 'Dead as They Come', seems to be re-enacting a script. Here, a well-known and well-loved man, probably a soldier, interferes with a little girl after considerable preparation, the liberal use

[19] Winnicott makes use of the concept 'good enough' parenting which need not be ideal but meets the child's need to a sufficient extent to allow for normal development. This is discussed in *The Child, the Family and the Outside World* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1964) and elaborated by Bruno Bettelheim in *The Good Enough Parent* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1987).

of alcohol and the injunction to forget all about it until next time. This may be a repetition of her own past experience. Among the features encountered in the victims in later life is the inability to maintain a generation gap between their adult selves and children, a superficial charm, flirtatiousness and a brittle sense of self-importance matched by a deeply repressed core of shame and rage. Mina's inappropriate treatment of Henry as an adult companion, play-mate and sexual object illustrates this. She feels special and lets Henry be special so long as he allows himself to be totally manipulated by her. She tries to accustom him to the idea that many other people are not what they seem but are freed from guilt and censure by their disguise and the excuse of inebriation. According to Meiselman: 'Alcohol very frequently deadens...moral constraints and allows the first act of incest to occur'.[20] Mina gives Henry wine and tells him that once she had drunk too much and 'the next day she couldn't remember a *thing*' (*FLLR*, p. 117). McCaghy points out that:

> For child molesters, reference to drinking in connection with their offences plays an important role in deviance disavowal. It permits them to admit their deviant behaviour without accepting responsibility for it.[21]

Here is a clear invitation to a hysterical dissociation and an attempt to establish state-dependent learning.[22]

The pre-Oedipal superego, which controls behaviour through fear of discovery and consequent shame and retribution, can be circumvented by secrecy, dissociation and denial. These are Mina's coping mechanisms and must have been established early and practised to a point of perfection. Henry's more mature superego threatens to punish him with guilt in the absence of exposure and the reader sees him struggling with the concept of responsibility. He colludes with Mina in keeping their cross-dressing games a secret, but the question of blame for actions committed in disguise is answered in his mind by the certainty that 'dressed like somebody else and pretending to be them you took their blame for what they did, or what you as them do' (*FLLR*, p. 125). He rejects Mina's games of pretence and self-deception in favour of integrity.

Linda is a knowing little girl who initiates a sexual game which seems to be a mixture of talking in bed with your best friend (typical of the latency period in girls), some earlier version of comparing bodies (typical of pre-school children) and maybe some imitation of her mother's behaviour with her lover. McEwan recalled an event which seems to have some elements of this relationship:

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[20] K. Meiselman, *Incest: a Psychological Study of Causes and Effects with Treatment Recommendations* (San Franscisco: Jossey - Bass, 1978), p 93.
[21] C. McCaghy, 'Drinking and Deviance Disavowal: the Case of Child Molesters', *Social Problems*, vol. 16 (1968), p. 48.
[22] Behaviour learned while in a particular condition of, e.g. excessive tiredness, drunkenness, intoxication with drugs or sexual excitement which disappears in normal situations but returns forcibly when the original state of mind is restored.

> My friendships had all the intensity of love-affairs. When I was seven and we were still living in England, my cousin Paula came to stay with us because her mother was ill. We became close friends and even shared a desk at school, facing out together the derision of a class in which the boys and girls kept, or were kept, determinedly apart. Because our house was not very large, Paula and I had to share a huge double bed. Night-times became a delirium of whispering and giggling under the blankets.[23]

Linda's mother makes no concessions to Henry's masculinity. He is given Linda's clothes to change into and invited to play with her in her bedroom unsupervised. His untimely, intense emotional experiences with Linda combine with Mina's excitement in response to him when dressed as a girl, and become confused with a memory of union experienced in infancy with his mother; normally recreated much later, in sexual intercourse with an adult partner. He finds an extraordinary fulfilment of this wish for oneness when he dresses up as a girl and mistakes himself for Linda in the mirror: 'Henry and Linda at once, closer than in the car, inside her now and she was in him' (*FLLR*, p. 114). He feels 'invisible inside this girl' (*FLLR*, p. 114): an experience which might lead to transvestism or fetishism in later life, or to difficulties in his future adolescence (especially in the homosexual phase which precedes the heterosexual phase), particularly as he has no male role models in his life:

> Until recently, if a problem of gender identity showed up in a boy's development, the usual medical tradition was to prophesy that he would grow out of it at puberty. This tradition is completely contradicted by the evidence of retrospective studies of the developmental antecedants of homosexuality, bisexuality, transvestism, and transexualism, all of which typically have a history dating back to prepuberty.[24]

As with the other examples of cross-dressing in McEwan's fiction, the anal phase issue of power is carefully distinguished from the issue of identity and this fits remarkably well with modern psychodynamic theories such as those of Kohut and Miller. Kiernan Ryan points out: 'The confounding of sexual difference and the suspension of liability are as enticing as they are frightening, and McEwan taps straight into our aptness to be torn by both emotions' (*Ryan*, p. 9).

The strategy of play-acting a script which reveals a truth denied in ordinary life is close to the theme of regression to childhood, and both are central to the television play *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration*. David Lee is not as pathetic as the cupboard man. He is not a diagnosed mental patient or a convicted criminal. He is a writer, engaged in work on his first novel and has close, if ambivalent, relationships with his parents and cohabitee. McEwan wrote this play in 1974, shortly after he finished 'Disguises' and he himself feels that it belongs in this series. He intended: 'to take a television cliché - a kind of family reunion, a dinner party - and to transform it by degrees and by logical extension to a

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[23] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[24] John Money and Anthony J. Russo, 'Homosexual Outcome of Discordant Gender Identity/Role in Childhood: Longitudinal Follow-up', *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, vol. 4, No. 1 (1979), p. 29.

point where fantasy had become reality' (*IG*, p. 11). Regression to early phases of development (particularly the anal phase) is well illustrated not only by 'David Lee's illusory sense of control' (*IG*, p. 11), but also by the power struggle between his lover and his mother. Both Ruth and Mrs. Lee collude in an effort to humiliate David. Both speak to each other from the position of parent about him as if he were a little boy.[25] Fromm holds that sado-masochism need not involve bondage or pain: 'Often all that is wanted...is to be made weak 'morally', by being treated or spoken to like a little child, or by being scolded or humiliated in different ways'.[26] The play seems to be about settling old scores, expressing hostility and taking revenge for past hurts. Everyone has a turn in the 'hot seat' and power is exercised by using personal information gained in the privacy of intimacy to expose the victim to hostile laughter. The jokes are always at someone's expense and have the quality of throwing excrement - an anal phase delight. The totally unexpected climax comes at the very end of the play when:

> We pull away and see that David is lying in a large cot. Ruth in a night-dress slides the side up, goes to the door, pauses there a moment to look at David, smiles to herself, turns the light out and softly closes the door...A small night-light burns. (*IG*, p. 42)

This anticipates Jack, Tom and Julie in *The Cement Garden*. David has managed to substitute for his controlling, possessive and powerful mother, a younger and less powerful but equally devoted mother, who will last him for the foreseeable future, is not encumbered by a husband and can be available for sex - a convenient solution to the Oedipal dilemma. This situation is not uncommon and constitutes a 'neurotic fit' between two people who have compatible pathological needs and meet them in a close relationship which looks from the outside like a marriage or partnership. These pairings can continue indefinitely if the fit is close but break down if one of the partners grows up or finds someone else whose psychopathology fits theirs even better. If the regression is a part of a sexual relationship, the partners are aroused by provoking and administering punishment for 'naughtiness' and the sado-masochistic strivings 'are more or less restricted to the physical realm; moreover by their amalgamation with sex they participate in the release of tension occurring in the sexual sphere and thus find some direct release'.[27]

Another story which illustrates the blurring of the generation gap between adults in the parent role and children, with real danger of sexual abuse and incest, is 'In Between the Sheets'. This is the fifth story in the second collection, first published in *The New Review* in the period of close co-operation between Ian Hamilton and McEwan. The story deals with the relationship between a father

[25] A parent/parent game known in transactional analysis as P.T.A., described by Berne in *Games People Play*, p. 43.
[26] Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 127.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

and daughter which is fraught with tension because Stephen is unsure of his role. He writes his daughter adult letters, which would be more appropriately addressed to his wife, and buys her an enormous number of presents which he puts in the bedroom in preparation for her visit. Presents for a lost child reappear in *The Child in Time*. They may have some connection with McEwan's memories of the excited preparations he and his parents made for Bernard, the orphan from Dr. Barnardo's, whom the McEwan family tried to adopt: 'I woke on Christmas morning to a double pile of presents. For me Bernard was real enough - there were his things - and I adopted him as an invisible playmate'.[28] The pathos of this image of a great pile of presents for a child who has grown up (Miranda) or has been irretrievably lost (Kate) may have its prototype in the painful disappointment of the McEwan family who had opened their home and their hearts to a little boy and never learnt what happened to him after their offer of adoption was rejected. Bernard became one of the ghosts that peopled McEwan's solitude and he still missed him in adolescence: 'It was then that Bernard, my lost adopted brother, might have been of use'.[29]

Charmian is one of several deformed figures in McEwan's fiction. She is an achondroplasiac dwarf.[3] With characteristic accuracy McEwan describes her good intelligence and the typical appearance which accompanies this affliction:

> Her head was bullet shaped and ponderous, her lower lip curled permanently outwards and she had the beginnings of a double chin. Her nose was squat and she had the faint downy greyness of a moustache. (*IBS*, p. 89)

Other examples are the old man in 'Pornography' who seems to be dying of chronic bronchitis, a hunchback in 'Disguises' and McNamee in *The Innocent*, who has never lost his milk teeth. It seems that McEwan is determined to include not only psychological but also physical pathology in his fiction. When Stephen arrives to visit Miranda, she is in bed with her friend: 'Little Charmian, Miranda's friend, plyed her fingernails backwards and forwards across Miranda's pale unblemished back. Charmian too was naked, and time seemed to stand still' (*IBS*, p. 82).

The scene with the naked father and his daughter, concealed in a white night-dress so that she 'could be any age' (*IBS*, p. 92), provides the climax. Resolution comes with the memory from his childhood of a bright morning and 'a field of dazzling white snow which he, a small boy of eight, had not dared scar with footprints' (*IBS*, p. 93). McEwan claims this is one of his own memories from his childhood in Kent (*NI*, p. 171).

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[28] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] Described by Sir Stanley Davidson in *The Principles and Practice of Medicine* (Edinburgh and London: Livingstone, 1958), p. 558.

One of the harmful effects of parent-child incest is the insecurity and confusion created by the fact that: 'the familiar father has suddenly put on the strange mask of lover and his daughter never knows which role he will play at any given time'.[31] Critics concentrated on the possibility of incest and altogether ignored the problem of Charmian. Stephen shows many characteristics of men who commit incest with their daughters:

> The fathers tend to be middle-aged...of normal or above-average intelligence, tend to be good workers and are usually not involved with other criminal activities. The marital relationship is usually poor and sexual relationships tend to be either non-existent or very unsatisfying.[32]

Stephen's sexual response to the child waitress shows him to be emotionally closer to the latency period than to adult genitality. Charmian and Miranda, like Raymond and the protagonist in 'Homemade', or Linda and Henry in 'Disguises', are exploring their own and each other's bodies and sensual responses. At this early homosexual stage of adolescence, eroticism is not yet intimately related to sexual intercourse but represents a reawakening of interest and feeling repressed in the Oedipal phase (in girls the Electra complex). Stephen's terror of intimacy with women may reflect damage in the Oedipal stage and he relies on his intellect, his imagination and the sublimated anal phase strivings of punctuality, routine and order to organise his life-style. As he has no investment in eroticism, except at the level of fantasy: 'experimentation in his writing, the lack of it in his life' (*IBS*, p. 88), his body is left to discharge sexual tension during sleep. It had been safe for him to love Miranda wholeheartedly while she was a child but her change into a woman poses a serious threat. His dream serves as a warning that his body is capable of a sexual response and without it he (like the protagonist in 'Butterflies', who was suddenly overwhelmed with violent sexual sensations) may have allowed the affectionate physical contact initiated by Miranda to move towards incestuous abuse of her. Miranda, in her search for both affection and sensual experience, may have enjoyed being kissed and cuddled until it was too late. Many men convicted of incest 'took advantage of their daughters' craving for love by making sexual activity the price for gratification of affectional needs'.[33] Unlike 'Homemade', the incest in this story is perpetrated only in the reader's mind but there is no doubt that McEwan has suggested it from the title to the climax.

A very different access visit is described in 'Psychopolis', the last of the stories in the second collection, originally published in *American Review* in November 1977 after McEwan's brief visit to

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[31] H. Giaretto, 'The Treatment of Father/Daughter Incest: a Psycho-Social Approach', *Children Today*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1976), p. 4.
[32] I. Cooper, 'Decriminalisation of Incest: New Legal-Clinical Responses' in Eekelaar, and Katz (eds.), *Family Violence* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1977), p. 519.
[33] M. Hersko, 'Incest: a Three Way Process', *Journal of Social Therapy*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1961), p. 29.

California in 1975. Here the father is entertaining three friends to a farewell party for the protagonist, while his children (who are with him for the week-end) chant prayers upstairs. In the style of a Socratic symposium, McEwan gives a transcript of a spirited argument about the rights and wrongs of various child-care practices.[34] The character of Terence resembles Colin in *The Comfort of Strangers*, in that he is very beautiful and attractive to both women and men but is not overtly homosexual. He pursues women who reject him and rejects women who pursue him, so that the crypto-homosexual theme surfaces here again briefly, to be taken up further in later fiction. This 'psychopolis' is a representation of a fragmented and chaotic inner world. Isolated people drift together and apart again in the style of borderline psychotics who have splits and repressions so deep that it is impossible to integrate the elements into a coherent identity which can be engaged in meaningful relationship. The protagonist's removal to a distant and unfamiliar environment produces a temporary disorientation. He is lonely and bored. He gets drunk and smokes pot. He meets several others who are equally adrift in the huge metropolis and very nearly loses himself altogether.

In its dissociation, dislocation and discontinuity, this story gives an excellent impression of people teetering on the verge of psychosis. The main characters, and the supporting cast of beach and bar inhabitants, seem isolated from each other by hostility and wretchedness. McEwan's description of them as 'a city of narcissists' is questionable, as on Kohut's model it is more correct to suppose they have narcissistic wounds which militate against self-esteem and direct self-defeating and self-destructive lifestyles and life-scripts.

These short stories are responsible for McEwan's early reputation and made enough of an impression on critics and readers to ensure that anything else that he writes is taken seriously by people interested in modern fiction. Unfortunately, as Alan Franks points out: 'the disparity between the numbers who have read [him] and the numbers who have read about [him]...and therefore the bulk of the condemnation that follows, cannot help but be ignorant'.[35] It is unlikely that his serious and thoughtful oratorio would have been noticed, let alone acclaimed, if he had not made his name known with the short stories. Probably either of his two major dramas, the novellas, or any one of his later novels could have stood alone, but it is unlikely that they would have attracted the attention and publicity with which they were greeted, as reviewers harked back to the early stories with headlines like: 'A Good-bye to Gore',[36] 'Slaughter of the Innocent',[37] or 'Mr. Nasty turns into Mr. Nice'.[38]

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[34] This theme reappears in 'The Authorised Child-Care Handbook H.M.S.O.' in *The Child in Time*.
[35] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.
[36] Andrew Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', *The Observer* (14 June 1992), p. 29.

McEwan says of his short stories: 'They were a kind of laboratory for me. They allowed me to try out different things, to discover myself as a writer'.[39] They also served a therapeutic purpose.

[37] Simon Hattenstone, 'Slaughter of the Innocent', *The Guardian* (23 June 1994), p. 10.
[38] John Walsh, 'Mr Nasty Turns into Mr Nice', *The Standard* (10 Sept. 1987), p. 33.
[39] R. Gonzalez Casademont, 'The Pleasure of Prose Writing vs Pornographic Violence: An Interview with Ian McEwan', *The European English Messenger*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1992), p. 40.

Chapter 4 - *The Daydreamer*

> marked imaginative activity is one of the essential characteristics of...highly gifted people. This activity emerges first in children's play...starting...before puberty...in the familiar day-dreaming which persists far beyond puberty...These day-dreams...serve as the fulfilment of wishes and as a correction of actual life.[1]

The Daydreamer, first published in 1994, followed *Black Dogs* (1992) and preceded *Enduring Love* (1997). It is dealt with in chapter 4 because the similarities and differences in McEwan's treatment of the 'unfinished business' from his childhood can be emphasised by placing the three cycles of short stories in sequence.

Until 1994 McEwan wrote for adults and many considered his fiction unsuitable even for them. His new departure into children's literature[2] was greeted with interest and some suspicion. As late as 1998 Elizabeth Renzetti said of *The Daydreamer*: 'The subject of its deliciously ghoulish stories...was deemed...to be better marketed for adults'.[3] By the age of forty-six, he had gained considerable experience of real children. He had known his step-daughters Polly, then twenty four, and Alice, then twenty two, 'since their infancy'.[4] His own sons William, then eleven, and Gregory, then eight, had never been separated from him for very long. Thus he had abundant opportunity to modify the stories he told himself by relating them to children. He told Annalena McAfee that the publication of *The Daydreamer* was: 'the fulfilment of a promise to his 11 year old step-daughter Alice, who had asked him to write some of the stories he had made up for her on holiday'.[5] He had wanted to write short stories again for some time and this 'was a way of tricking [himself] into it'.[6] He gives Peter Fortune all the things that he himself missed at his age (10 - 12 years). Descriptions by journalists of the atmosphere in his Oxford home emphasise the difference in his parenting style from that which he experienced in his own boyhood. He told William Leith: 'People talked to their children in different ways then. The gap in communication between adults and children was huge'.[7]

McEwan values the child's ability to lose himself in a book or inhabit a private fantasy world - a facility which he himself never lost. Remembering himself at Peter's age, he wrote:

As well as imaginary friends, I devised elaborate mental games, though I would not have

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[1] S. Freud, *On Sexuality* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1977), p. 222.
[2] *Rose Blanche* was originally an Italian children's book created by Roberto Innocenti and Christophe Gallaz; the British publishers asked McEwan to rewrite it. It is, as McEwan explained in a letter to Jack Slay Jr. (27 November 1990), 'a very free translation...So it is by me and not by me'.
[3] Elizabeth Renzetti, *Author Has Gift For Ghoulish Suspense: 580 CFRA* (http://interactive.cfra.com/1998/02/27/11510.html).
[4] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.
[5] McAfee, 'Dreams, Demons and a Rare Talent to Disturb', p. 21.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', p. 9.

> called them games at the time; they were compelling necessities and to have failed to engage in them would have invoked punishment, usually disguised as misfortune.[8]

Charles Darke, in *The Child in Time*, explains his decision to publish Stephen Lewis's novel as a book for children by saying:

> the greatest of writers all possessed a child-like vision...[while] the greatest so-called children's books were precisely those that spoke to both children and adults, to the incipient adult within the child, to the forgotten child within the adult. (*CT*, p. 31)

Lemonade describes a holiday with cousins, when Stephen was eleven years old, and is very reminiscent of the last chapter of *The Daydreamer* as well as McEwan's own boyhood in North Africa. In 1994, reviews about *The Daydreamer* bore an uncanny resemblance to those, created in 1987 by McEwan in *The Child in Time*, about *Lemonade*, including boosted sales as a result of the occasional 'impassioned attack on the book' (*CT*, p. 34). As Sebastian Faulks says: 'Especially useful to publishers is the outraged review, which can be used to titillate the public appetite'.[9] Robert Winder comments: 'he works on two levels - the childish and the adult - but in truth it is hard to discern the gap'.[1]

The orphaned protagonists of 'Last Day of Summer' and 'Disguises' are twelve and ten years old, the over-active and disturbed Adrian, whose family is falling apart in 'First Love, Last Rites', is ten, while Connie in 'Homemade' and Jane in 'Butterflies', whose parents fail to protect them, are ten and nine years old respectively. Linda in 'Disguises', also a ten-year-old, seems to have a mother who is permissive to the point of neglect. All these children are lonely and exposed to serious dangers. Not so Peter Fortune, who is ten at the beginning of this cycle of short stories and twelve at the end. Through this privileged, healthy and imaginative boy, McEwan has given himself the opportunity to confront some of the problems in his boyhood with the benefit of hindsight and experience. In spite of attempts on the part of his critics to pour *The Daydreamer* 'into the mould' of his unsavoury reputation, hints at 'a sex scene'[11] and some 'murmurs to the effect that McEwan's taste for the ghoulish is not quite the thing for a children's book',[12] this collection was favourably received. Paul Taylor clearly misses 'the dark and the deviant in his early stories' and feels that McEwan is 'too strenuously engaged in keeping the sweetness and light levels high'.[13] Carolyn Hart, on the other hand, calls it: 'The most ambitious and inventive children's novel published this year [1994]'.[14]

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[8] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[9] Sebastian Faulks, 'You Can't Draw Fine Lines with a Blunt Blue Pencil', *The Independent on Sunday* (27 Jan. 1991), p. 30
[10] Robert Winder, 'Imaginary Journeys of a Daydreamer', *The Independent* (7 Oct. 1994), p. 18.
[11] McAfee, 'Dreams, Demons and a Rare Talent to Disturb', p. 21.
[12] Winder, 'Imaginary Journeys of a Daydreamer', p. 18.
[13] Paul Taylor, 'Vanishing Cream: *The Daydreamer*', *The Independent on Sunday* (2 Oct. 1994), p. 41.
[14] Carolyn Hart, 'A Glimpse of Worlds Within Worlds', *The Financial Times* (3 Dec. 1994), p. 18.

McEwan makes several concessions to the immaturity of his readers: his words are simple; his grammar uncomplicated; his chapters short. He avoids the triteness of such exclamations as 'drat' or 'gosh', choosing instead to invent invectives like 'filthy custard'. Even a ten-year-old child is not unaware of the similarity between 'filthy custard' and 'fucking bastard', but a certain propriety is adhered to. The sense of adventure, mischief and fun is strong, and the brooding evil in his earlier fiction is diluted and transformed, so that these stories are quite unobjectionable. Peter's family is intact and harmonious. His parents are cultured and successful. McEwan gave him his own heart's desire in the form of a sister, Kate, who is three years his junior, and there is a family cat. The parents monitor the environment without intrusiveness, but are almost never out of earshot - nothing bizarre here. Peter is gifted with a wonderful imagination, which singles him out from other children. McEwan takes pains to reassure the reader that: 'when he grew up he became an inventor and a writer of stories and led a happy life' (*D*, p. 14). All this is a clear invitation to emulate or identify with him. The work continues to deal with psychological issues. The material is so true to accepted psychodynamic models that it seems likely that it was based on close observations of real children, possibly with the aid of a diary as McEwan claims Peter has done (*D*, p. 14). The problems are never severe enough to merit the label of trauma and defence mechanisms are employed appropriately. They support Peter's self-esteem and dispose of unacceptable feelings. There is an obvious relationship between the precipitating event and the strategies used to defuse any build-up of tension.

The unconscious is close to the surface in normal children and readily accessible. The processes of condensation and disguise of noxious material are more transparent than in adults and the symbols easier to interpret. Children's daydreams, the plots of their spontaneous stories and unstructured play provide the analyst with material roughly equivalent to that found in the dreams and free associations of adults. In spite of this, in children as in adults, the unconscious is outside subjective awareness. Much of McEwan's skill in writing *The Daydreamer* lies in his ability to imply the unconscious aspects of Peter's experience, while describing his efforts to deal with them in fantasy.

Peter notes the complaints of the adults around him about his 'mental truancy' but attributes the difficulties resulting from this to a simple lack of understanding on their part. This position is so reasonable as to brand it at once as rationalisation. The reader is encouraged to share Peter's superior amusement at the obtuseness of his teacher, who decided to move him into a remedial class for maths while Peter pondered the problems of astronomical numbers instead of tackling a simple sum (*D*, p.

14). The invitation to join in his mother's silent laughter at his father (*D*, p. 10) is reminiscent of Julie's smile as she tucks Tom into bed after his outburst of rejection towards Jack in *The Cement Garden*. Peter's politeness and composure are disarming: 'Oh, sorry Dad...I forgot you were there' (*D*, p. 10). It is easy to miss the dismissal and condescension which provokes his father's outburst of frustration and forget that it is Peter's unconscious which engineers his father's loss of face. Peter's fear of failure at maths and his Oedipal strivings are disguised as an 'innocent' and temporary lapse of attention. The same mechanisms are in operation when he recounts the story of losing Kate. The parents show some unease about entrusting her to Peter's care, while he proudly accepts the task and elaborates the role of Kate's protector into a heroic adventure. He imagines her 'sobbing helplessly' while he devotes his mind to a plan for her defence. This grandiose fantasy of courage and fortitude distracts him and gives his unconscious an opportunity to accidentally leave her behind on the bus while he gets off at the correct stop. These examples, and others in the stories which follow, illustrate the method of dealing with ambivalence by the mechanisms of splitting; denial; projection; repression; rationalisation; projective identification; displacement of affect; and wish-fulfilment in fantasy.

The first story, called 'The Dolls', explores the theme of Peter's relationship with Kate. Ambivalence between them is strong and Peter is aware of both his love and hate at different times. They play in parallel, he with his toys and she with hers, and struggle over the imaginary line that divides their shared space. Peace is facilitated by projecting unmanageable feelings into the Bad Doll. This doll seems to be of neuter gender. It is ugly and maimed and therefore serves as an ideal object to embody evil. Both children dislike it but are afraid to get rid of it in case it returns in the middle of the night to take its revenge (*D*, p. 17) - a powerful metaphor for the return of repressed material in nightmares. A precarious balance of power is maintained between them with the help of parental intervention. When the level of violence passes the limit of safety the parents act to part the children. Implicit in this separation, but never consciously realised by Peter, is the parents' awareness of growing sexual maturation underlying their bickering and physical tussles. Connie's parents did not anticipate the dangers of unsupervised play between her and her brother with tragic results in 'Homemade'.

Peter is moved to the box room. He seems unaware of favouritism and does not resent the disparity in the amount of space allotted to each child. He frankly enjoys the quiet, freedom and privacy. Their old room, now Kate's room, comes to symbolise Kate herself, especially her body and the unfathomable mystery of her potential fertility suggested by her sixty dolls. Under the surface of

consciously appreciated peace there is an uneasy truce in the age old battle of the sexes, founded on envy of difference and the wish to restore wholeness without loss of identity and separateness. Peter's wish to be a girl, if only temporarily, is not free to express itself through straightforward play with Kate's dolls. When he breaks the taboo and enters her room in her absence, his guilt is at once transformed into a paranoid feeling that the dolls are looking at him with hostility and disapproval. He tries to use his customary escape into intellectualisation: 'He sat on the bed and thought back over the old days when he had slept here...When you got to ten, you began to see the whole picture, how things connected, how things worked...an overview...' (*D*, p. 20)

The unconscious intrudes into this neat parody of adult musings to supply the missing elements of the picture. These have been repressed and disowned over the years and now combine to produce a scenario acted out by the Bad Doll while the other dolls look on. Peter himself, even in his daydream, maintains a reasonable and pseudo-adult position, watching the Bad Doll with interest. Erotic elements creep in, disguised in the Bad Doll's efforts to join him on the bed: 'Its little pink body quivered with the effort and strain...The gasps and grunts became louder and more piteous. Slowly the head, sweatier than ever, rose into Peter's view' (*D*, p. 21). This glimpse of sexual arousal weaves together the fantasies from the anal phase (illustrated by the use of foul language -'muttering swear words that even a Bad Doll should not use' (*D*, p. 20)) with dimly recalled images of the primal scene (Peter used to visit his parents' bedroom at night when frightened by nightmares (*D*, p. 15)) and early infantile theories of sexual differences (girls are castrated boys). The Fortune family is unlikely to have been inhibited by the taboos which crippled the children in *The Cement Garden*. McEwan proudly told Annalena McAfee: 'My impression of conversations with my children is that there is nothing you can't talk to children about short of VAT and income tax returns'.[15] This confusion may belong to McEwan's family of origin rather than his family of procreation. He told William Leith about the secrecy which pervaded his home:

> I remember having the sense that everyone seems to know something that you don't, and they won't tell you they won't even talk about it to each other so you'll never find out...Something's being said that you can't hear.[16]

McEwan seems to have projected the whole untidy mess onto Peter and he, in turn, projects it onto the Bad Doll together with the safer but also unconscious sense of grievance about his banishment into the box room.

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[15] McAfee, 'Dreams, Demons and a Rare Talent to Disturb', p. 21.
[16] Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', p. 9.

Close on the heels of exclamations such as 'He's doing it!' (*D*, p. 21) and 'now we'll see something!' (*D*, p. 21) from the watching dolls, the Bad Doll intones the slogan 'What's fair is fair' (*D*, p. 21) and this is taken up by the others. Despite condensation, displacement and disguise, the erotic material is still too threatening to reach Peter's awareness and is not shared with his juvenile readers. There is an almost immediate shift to less deeply repressed issues of unfairness. This is elaborated in terms of the shortage of space in the doll's living quarters, as if Peter had rehearsed similar arguments in an effort to silence his own niggling resentments. His wish to shout 'My turn for that room' (*D*, p. 24) is voiced by the Bad Doll. The opportunity to think his grievances through, at one remove, highlights the hopelessness of applying the concept of fairness to his jealousies about Kate. He takes from this fantasy the hopeful promise that 'One day...that room will be mine' (*D*, p. 25). 'That room' symbolises Peter's faith in his future union with the feminine principle. The adult reader knows that this eventually takes place through meaningful heterosexual relationships and spiritual maturation within the self. For Peter the crucial issues are not altogether resolved, but he understands that time and experience will eventually provide the solution.

'The Cat' is a story about death and the after-life. It is also about masculinity and aggression. Peter loves William, but on icy mornings, when he is late for school, he envies him his privileged position and freedom. He is aware that William is old and frail, sympathises with his loss of power and resents the Tom next door who encroaches on William's territory. There is nothing unconscious about this. Peter's wish to be a cat is not uncommon and getting into somebody else's skin is a well known metaphor for empathy. The idea of unzipping a cat, while bizarre in itself, is not strange to children who own pyjama cases in the shape of furry animals. The sadism of skinning a live cat is deeply buried and no reader could, by any stretch of the imagination, see Peter joining the street gang of boys 'preparing to roast a live cat' (*FLLR*, p. 71). The detailed description of the unzipping has overtones of erotic foreplay and defloration:

> The piece of bone fitted well between his forefinger and thumb. He tightened his grip and gave a tug. William Cat's purr grew even louder. Peter pulled again, downwards, and this time he felt something give. Looking down through the fur, and parting it with the tips of his fingers, he saw that he had opened up a small slit in the cat's skin...Again he pulled, and now there was a dark opening two inches long...A paw was gently pushing against his fingers again. William Cat wanted him to go on. (*D*, p. 30)

The eroticism is clearer if the paragraph is read in isolation, but when buried in the context of the story it is less obvious. In spite of this, the sensuality is transferred into the spiritual realm. This strategy of interchanging the erotic and the spiritual is frequently found in intellectual discourses on love. The

tenderness, warmth and mutuality of the interaction around the exchange of bodies is romantic. Once accomplished, it reads like pure wish-fulfilment: 'How fine it was, to dress yourself as a cat...What a delight, to walk on four soft white paws. He could see his whiskers springing out from the sides of his face and he felt his tail curling behind him' (*D.* p. 33). Having shed his human shape, Peter Cat disposes of his superego with it. Peter could never become the Bad Doll, because too much of what he wished to deny lived in projection in it. Desirable and apparently unattainable male virtues had long been projected into William, and Peter avails himself at once of wisdom, courage, dignity, independence, energy and obedience to natural instincts. He acts out William's grudge against the Tom next door and many of his own besides. As soon as they meet, he initiates an exchange of hostilities which is ruthless as well as funny: 'you walking flea circus...I'll tie your whiskers round your neck' (*D*, p. 34). This is far more threatening and direct than 'you filthy custard', while 'you are nothing but the soft turd of a sick dog' (*D*, p. 35) is crushing as well as imaginative. Peter enjoys himself: '[He] was always such a polite boy. How splendid it was now to spit out these insults' (*D*, p. 35). During the ensuing fight, Peter beats the Tom in a manner that is not fair but is decisive. The neighbourhood cats watch with excited interest. This is a significant change from the hostile audience of Kate's dolls who witnessed his humiliation and prefigures the group of children in the school yard who confirm his moral victory over the school bully in a later story. Battles for territory and status need to be ratified by the group. Peter's visualisation of the Spirit takes the sting out of William's death and helps him to accept the loss. The burial of the cat's body by the whole grieving family adds the note of finality to this rite of passage. In the absence of myth and ritual there are difficulties in coming to terms with death, which after the age of seven becomes a stark reality, especially if experienced through the loss of a close family member. The death of pets is a sad but salutary preparation for future bereavements.

'Vanishing Cream' is about tidying up unfinished business from childhood in preparation for independence: 'Peter wanted to build something, invent something, but he could not find any useful bits and the rest of the family would not help' (*D*, p. 41). He feels bored. Psychoanalysts regard boredom as a complex mood in which something from the unconscious is trying to return to awareness against resistance, disrupting concentration on tasks and spoiling the enjoyment of relaxation.[17] Vague but importunate anxiety has been stirred up. He indulges briefly in a game of 'If it Weren't for Them'.[18]

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[17] According to Fenichel (1954) the bored person seeks an object to be helped by it 'to find an instinctual aim which he lacks'. He knows he wants something, but doesn't know what it is. Hence the irritability and restlessness inseparable from boredom and absent in apathy, Rycroft, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, p. 14.

[18] Berne, *Games People Play: the Psychology of Human Relationships*, p. 104.

> If he lived on his own he would know where to find screwdrivers and string. If he were by himself, he would know where his thoughts were too. How was he expected to make the great inventions that would change the world when his sister and his parents threw up these mountains of disorder? (*D*, p. 41)

He moves on to a comparison between his family and the ideal family: 'Why aren't we like other people, with batteries in every-thing, and toys that work, and jigsaws and card games with all their bits, and everything in the proper cupboard?' (*D*, p. 41). This expresses a dim wish for integration. Something in Peter's mind is very untidy and incomplete.

Anxieties about growing up and the fear of death reach through the whole history of development to the earliest problems of separation anxiety.[19] Integration of this into consciousness is difficult, because the defences against it were established in a setting of discontinuous time and a very imperfect understanding of reality. Self and the mother were, at this time, blissfully one, except for alarming episodes when the mother unpredictably disappeared, leaving the self in a state of helpless loneliness and unmet need - omnipotence (instant wish fulfilment) alternates with impotence (helplessness and privation). In the absence of words, these strong and primitive feelings are experienced as images, and magic serves for cause and effect.

McEwan gives the child reader a masterly introduction to the idea of the unconscious by the inspired metaphor of the kitchen drawer. He uses commonplace objects which are given deep symbolic meaning: 'things that had no natural place, things that had no use but did not deserve to be thrown away, things that might be mended one day' (*D*, p. 40). By analogy, the unconscious contains memories of images, thoughts and feelings discarded by consciousness as unacceptable, redundant or insignificant. In addition to items like: 'batteries that still had a little life, nuts without their bolts...the dullest kind of marbles', which can represent unimportant memories which can be safely erased from the memory stores, there are objects which would excite any psychoanalyst's imagination: 'a padlock without a key or a combination lock whose secret number was a secret to everyone' (*D*, p. 40). These could symbolise unconscious complexes. The rhetorical question: 'What could you *do* with a single piece of jigsaw?' (*D*, p. 40) has been answered in many laborious hours of analysis with disturbed children and is shown clearly in Peter's nightmare of 'red-skinned, slime-covered creatures who chased him through his sleep' (*D*, p. 15). Certainly it is wise not to 'dare throw it away' (*D*, p. 40). Jung would have been delighted by the inclusion of 'a cracked fossil', readily interpretable as a formed

[19] Separation anxiety is 'anxiety (at the prospect of) being separated from someone believed to be necessary for one's survival. Separation anxiety may be objective, as in infancy or in adult invalids, or neurotic, when the presence of another person is used as a defence against some other form of anxiety. In both cases two factors are involved: dread of some unspecified danger, either from the outside or from mounting internal tension, and dread of losing the object believed capable of protecting or relieving one', Rycroft, *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, p. 150.

element of the universal unconscious, and 'foreign coins' which could stand for the mysteries to be fathomed by future study before their value can be appreciated. Packets of seeds, 'too old to plant, not old enough to throw away' (*D*, p. 41) seem to hint at unrealised potential left behind in earlier phases of development.

The climax of this exploration comes with Peter's discovery of the jar of vanishing cream. Young children, before they have a firm grasp of grammar, and schizophrenics, who exhibit thought disorder, commonly show concrete thinking. Some artists and comedians employ this deliberately to make a point or a joke. In Peter's case, the substitution of the idea of vanishing from the cream to the object on which it is spread arrives straight from the unconscious evoking a 'yelp of surprise' (*D*, p. 41). It is like a magic gift from the psyche - a map showing the path between his present misgivings about independence, through his habitual reluctance to join in, all the way back to his separation anxiety. An answer suggests itself. His ten years of good experiences with his family, which made a heavy contribution to the positive side of his ambivalence, causes him to pause before pronouncing judgement: 'There was no doubt in Peter's mind that he loved his mother dearly, and that she loved him' (*D*, p. 42). Set against this is the early crime of vanishing when he needed her: 'she had to go'. His dissembled affection is reminiscent of Albert's seductiveness in 'Solid Geometry'. The sadistic description of his mother's disappearance[20] echoes the painful contortions inflicted on Maisie but this is mild in comparison with the suffering inflicted on his father and more particularly Kate.[21] They too are weighed in the balance and Oedipal strivings and sibling rivalry tip it downwards in spite of the list of favours owed to each. Peter's revenge is complete and his freedom unquestioned. At last it is he who is in control.

Before too long, however, Peter discovers that he has discarded too much in an effort to create order. This can be seen as a paradigm of scientific theories which discard any facts that don't fit the model and was one of the youthful McEwan's warnings for the millennium. By introducing it, close to the idea of the Spirit, he offers a child-friendly version of the Socratic dialogues of his adult fiction, notably *Black Dogs*. In revisiting the scenes of his infancy, Peter comes at last to the roots of his reaction formation. This boy who preaches the virtues of solitude, and wants nothing more than to be left alone to exercise his creativity and enlarge his intellect, suddenly experiences the baby's panic and helplessness in the face of terrifying nameless threat:

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[20] 'There was an unpleasant moment when her head and legs were still on the grass, with nothing in between', McEwan, *The Daydreamer*, p. 43.
[21] 'Kate's head, as well as her hands, was disappearing. Now she was running round the garden like a headless chicken, waving her shortened arms. She would have been screaming if she had had a mouth to scream with', *Ibid.*, p. 44.

> That night Peter did not sleep, he ran. He ran through his dreams, down echoing halls, across a desert of stones and scorpions, down ice mazes, along a sloping pink spongy tunnel with dripping walls. This was when he realised he was not being chased by the monster. He was running down its throat. (*D*, p. 47)

This is pre-verbal material so the images are disconnected and can only be integrated if they are acted out at least in fantasy. The end ('I don't want to join in') and the middle ('I can't trust you') can not be connected to the original beginning ('You were not there when I needed you') without creating a scenario that contains terror and rage, punishment and revenge. If there is enough good experience in realistic later memories, ambivalence can be re-established with a bias towards love, which off-sets but does not deny the resentment and hate. In spite of imperfections, the family are experienced as 'good enough' and their continued existence in the face of hate and annihilation in fantasy can be accepted with gratitude and massive relief. The depressive position has been securely re-established. The missing piece of the jigsaw is in place and Peter understands that it is only a small part of the whole picture.

This story attracted more comment than the others from reviewers, watchful as ever for the macabre in McEwan's work. Megan Tresidder actually asked him if there was a dismemberment scene in *The Daydreamer* and quotes his rather devious reply: 'No. Not yet...Do you think I should put one in?'.[22] Carolyn Hart's description of Peter as 'a domestic Attila the Hun'[23] seems a little harsh, given the bloodless and temporary nature of the dismemberment, while Robert Winder judges 'the odd tremors of violence...merely surreal'.[24] Paul Taylor feels that 'a child can have better reasons for wanting to make his family disappear than that they are untidy'.[25] These criticisms seem superficial and lend some support to McEwan's feeling that his reputation distorts the perception of his work.

In the story called 'The Bully', McEwan revisits his evergreen themes of evil and sado-masochism in the common and comparatively innocuous setting of the school playground.[26] Insight, painfully gained through the 'lugubrious' (*NI*, p. 170) creation of *The Comfort of Strangers* and *The Innocent*, is transferred to Peter through an exercise in logic, imagination and daydreaming. The ideas that: there is a complementary relationship between victim and aggressor; that both consent to the abuse at an unconscious level; that either is free to terminate the contract by refusing to play; that the roles are readily reversed; and finally that the rules of the game enslave both the persecutor and the victim

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[22] Tresidder, 'The Dreamer Who Creates Nightmares', p. 2.
[23] Hart, 'A Glimpse of Worlds Within Worlds', p. 18.
[24] Winder, 'Imaginary Journeys of a Daydreamer', p. 18.
[25] Taylor, 'Vanishing Cream: *The Daydreamer*', p. 41.
[26] McEwan assured Sue Lawley, during his interview on 'Desert Island Discs', *BBC Radio 4* (16 Jan. 2000), that he was not bullied at Woolverstone Hall.

are demonstrated in Peter's victory over Barry Tamerlane, the school bully. It occurs to Peter that Barry 'leads a double life' (*D*, p. 50) when at his birthday party he notices that in his home Barry is an only child and, in the presence of his parents, behaves with generosity and charm. This is state-dependent learning, beautifully explained to the child reader: 'Each morning, somewhere along the way from home to school the boy turns into a monster, and at the end of the day, the monster turns back into a boy' (*D*, p. 50). Applying his new insight to the problem, Peter decides: 'We've dreamed up his power and his strength. We've made him into what he is' (*D*, p. 56). When Barry next approaches him with unreasonable demands Peter is able to confront him. The watching children are suddenly able to see the situation through Peter's eyes and withdraw their projections, leaving Barry deflated and powerless: 'He simply stood in the circle of children, and wept snottily into his hands' (*D*, p. 57). The role-reversal is complete. Barry is crushed and Peter is 'a hero' (*D*, p. 58). In spite of the temptation to replace Barry in his role of tyrant/hero, Peter demonstrates his maturity and his sensitive conscience by befriending Barry and protecting him from the jeering children.

The hopeful note here is that even at the age of ten, it is possible to have outgrown the anal phase motivation of striving for power over others and to cultivate the virtue of empathy which helps Peter to recognise the bully in himself and acknowledge the 'little boy with the teddy bear' in Barry. It is hard to agree with Paul Taylor when he belittles Peter's contrition after 'making public certain soppy secrets'[27] about Barry.[28] There are echoes here of the Tory Party Law and Order debate filmed in *The Ploughman's Lunch*, which showed a large group of respectable adult citizens, none of whom had ever asked themselves or each other: 'Who was the bully now?' (*D*, p. 58). The roots of this story may lie in McEwan's experience of scapegoating in boarding school: 'that year we had turned on two of our number...Their parents had no choice but to take them away'.[29] The guilt of his complicity in this small atrocity may have been finally expiated, through Peter, after thirty-three years (McEwan was thirteen when this incident took place).

The story called 'The Burglar' has elements of adventure which are presented as factual and a substratum of psychological truth together with a moral lesson. Peter pits his wits against those of 'a magician, a maestro of theft' (*D*, p. 60) who is playing a dangerous game of 'brinkmanship' and seems 'to be asking to be caught' (*D*, p. 61). The children in *The Cement Garden* are also 'asking to be caught' by arranging that Derek should find them 'in flagrante'. The policeman goes some way to

[27] Vernon uses this same strategy to destroy Garmony in *Amsterdam*.
[28] Taylor, 'Vanishing Cream: *The Daydreamer*', p. 41.
[29] Ian McEwan, 'The Unforgettable Momentum of a Childhood Fantasy', *The Times* (22 Sept. 1986), p. 15.

explaining this behaviour in *The Comfort of Strangers*, where the same game is played in its hard and third degree form: 'it was as if being caught and punished was as important as the crime itself' (*CS*, p. 123). This fits with the idea that Barry Tamerlane 'wasn't able to stop himself' (*D*, p. 50) and that when the 'bad internalised child' is out of control, the repressed and projected superego acts as an 'internal saboteur' to elicit control from others especially the established law-enforcement agencies. Structural family therapy models regard any anti-social or criminal behaviour as 'a cry for help', in the form of forceful intervention.[30]

The police can not outwit 'Soapy Sam',[31] the burglar, and Peter takes up the challenge and reveals him as Mrs. Goodgame, the nearest approximation to a witch that Peter's limited experience of evil can offer. In his dream, Peter defeats her and secures her rehabilitation. The moral is that there is a limit beyond which no-one should go. Wrong-doing must not be condoned, but evil-doers deserve understanding and compassion together with a chance to make reparation and mend their ways. This story seems to fall uncomfortably between a fairy-tale (where the witch must die) and a realistic detective story (where the hero courageously faces danger and wins through). In this it resembles *The Innocent*, which is a thriller with a message about evil and war. Both have a didactic moral purpose which muddles issues already awkwardly tacked together.

The story called 'The Baby' is charming and instructive. It is unlikely to have roots in McEwan's own early experience. He was the youngest and for many years the only child but his older son had the experience of coming to terms with the arrival of the younger. Peter's sovereignty of his much reduced space in the box room is further encroached on by his parents' unilateral decision to give Kate's room to Aunt Laura and the baby and move Kate into Peter's room with him. Peter's tolerance is stretched to its limit and Kate uses her magic wand to cause him and baby Kenneth to change places, to teach Peter the difference between a boy and a toddler. Peter rediscovers the lost world of part objects, discontinuous time and the frustrations of trying to make benevolent giants understand the non-verbal communications of a baby. He also relives the delights of immediate experiences: 'Egginess exploded in his mouth, a white and yellow fountain of sensation shot upwards through his brain. His whole body lurched as he tried to point at the bowl Laura held. He *had* to have more' (*D*, p. 78). The short attention span and distractability of the infant is humorously and accurately portrayed together with a baby's unerring sensitivity to other people's feelings and moods. It is easy to empathise with Kenneth,

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[30] 'Structural family therapy' is a model put forward by Salvador Minuchin and accepted by most family therapists in England and USA.

[31] Here the game is 'cops and robbers', an adult form of 'hide and seek', played in an easy, second degree form, Berne, *Games People Play*, p. 132.

once his limitations are realised.

This same point is made powerfully by McEwan in 'Conversations with a Cupboard Man' and much less persuasively in 'Butterflies', where he presents adult men who are functioning emotionally at the level of young children. Understanding of the complex mechanisms of fixation and regression could not be assumed for the average reader (and critic) and could not be explained within the constraints of the style used. Here his skill in putting both adults and older children in touch with the infant's subjective experience helps the reader to make this connection.

'The Grown-up' is another of the stories singled out by critics for comment. Robert Winder feels: 'The more shadowy aspect of the book is its undertow of grief about growing up. For all its levity and gracefulness, this is a never-never land with clouds on the horizon'.[32] Paul Taylor notes: 'the culminating transformation which worries him is the one that will happen by stealth and eventually render "his brilliant, playful eleven year old self" as incomprehensible to him as grown-ups are now'.[33] Carolyn Hart describes the earlier chapters as: 'the infant version of the Martian's postcard home, and a telling prelude to Peter's last metamorphosis - into a grown-up'.[34]

Peter, as a member of 'The Beach Gang', enjoys a holiday on the Cornish coast and eventually notices Gwendoline. He drifts off to sleep, preoccupied by thoughts of her and dreams that he has been transformed into an adult. He and Gwendoline find their way into the tunnel and kiss: 'Peter knew that in all the years of a happy childhood...he had never done anything better, anything so thrilling and strange as kiss Gwendoline' (*D*, p. 93). To adults familiar with McEwan's symbols, the tunnel, the rats and the ape, met with in previous stories, sound a note of caution and hint at the dangers of secrets and sexuality. The tunnel here is a part of Paradise which is out of bounds: dark, damp, dangerous and rat infested. However, Peter at twelve years old does not aspire to the exploration of this mystery. This is not the premature and abusive incest of 'Homemade', the risky brinkmanship of unprotected sex in 'First Love, Last Rites', nor the innocent sex-play of Henry and Linda in 'Disguises'. It is not even a daydream. The symbols do not provoke anxiety because they are met with in the safety of Peter's sleep. The message is that when twenty-one years old, and established firmly in the adult world, a man may embark on a relationship with an adult woman of nineteen in which the emotional aspects are primary but can be expressed physically - a moral tale.

This had been the very time when life went dark and sour for McEwan and some of his

[32] Winder, 'Imaginary Journeys of a Daydreamer', p. 18.
[33] Taylor, 'Vanishing Cream: *The Daydreamer*', p. 41.
[34] Hart, 'A Glimpse of Worlds Within Worlds', p. 18.

characters exhibit a nostalgic desire to return to a time before this age. In this story, McEwan tries to ease the transition for the reader by presenting interesting work and romantic love as rewards for growing up. He 'wanted to show that being an adult can be fun too'.[35] When Peter wakes up, his point of view about growing-up has changed: 'There were things they knew and liked which for him were only just appearing, like shapes in a mist' (*D*, p. 95). The story is very simple and deals with the beginning of the progress from the latency period into adolescence. Significantly, the homosexual phase is altogether missed out and Peter moves, in his dream, from childhood into the heterosexual phase with his discovery of the delights of romantic love which are in store for him in the future. However, they are still a long way off. Peter, by his own estimation, has another nine years to wait for his body and mind to mature and this is simply a reassuring glimpse forward. Sex and death are adventures waiting in the distant future.

[35] McAfee, 'Dreams, Demons and a Rare Talent to Disturb', p. 21.

Chapter 5 - Novellas:

The Cement Garden, *The Comfort of Strangers* and *Amsterdam*

> You like to feel you're getting better but this is not the case, and you only have to look at other writers work to know that this isn't so. But I need this myth, otherwise it would be very hard to go on if you felt that your best work was behind you. But there are things you can do when you are young which you can't do later on.[1]

Nothing illustrates this statement so well as the inclusion of *Amsterdam* in this chapter. It won The Booker Prize (1998), which was denied to *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), and demonstrates clearly the distance travelled by McEwan's work since he began writing.

The Cement Garden and *The Comfort of Strangers* are closer to the short stories than McEwan's other work. At first glance they seem to be very different from one another, but closer scrutiny reveals much common ground. Both deal with real situations, sensational enough to be reported in newspapers, although neither was actually based on such reports. McEwan told Andrew Billen: 'Someone...sent me a story from Italy of three children whose mother had died and they had buried her in a cellar',[2] and again: 'some friends of mine a few years ago went to Algeria and more or less lived out the plot of *The Comfort of Strangers*, just about escaping with their lives.[3] Although it is clear that *Amsterdam* is set in the last months of Major's government, McEwan's uncanny gift of premonition reappears in Mrs Garmony's television programme in defence of her husband, so reminiscent of Mrs Clinton's broadcast in 1998 at the height of the Monica Lewinski affair. The fact that certain events occur in reality does not explain an author's wish to deal with them at length in fiction. Information gained from prefaces, introductions and interviews sheds some light on McEwan's conscious intentions, memories of his own experiences and the fantasies which lie behind these bizarre and disturbing stories. McEwan himself pointed out that *The Cement Garden* was: 'a synthesis of some of the concerns of [his] short stories' (*IG*, p. 14) but this holds equally true for *The Comfort of Strangers*. The themes of incest, cross-dressing, and sado-masochism met in 'Homemade', 'Disguises', 'Psychopolis' and 'Pornography' are revisited in greater depth and detail. They appear again in *Amsterdam*, described from a superficial and remote point of view. All the old themes - murder, rape, transvestism, betrayal and abuse of power - are there and yet they fail to move because the characters, despite their years of experience and the attainment of dizzy heights in their careers, have not grown

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[1] Danziger, 'In Search of Two Characters', p. 13.
[2] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.
[3] *Ibid.*

more loveable, honest or wise. The fact that they continue to use the old mechanism of rationalisation no longer hides their crimes even from themselves let alone the reader. Of course, sleaze in public life is always marketable. Certainly, McEwan's wish to deal with 'what is bad and difficult and unsettling'[4] sometimes makes his work read like an effort to illustrate the major perversions, with homosexuality hinted at and bestiality alluded to delicately in 'Reflections of a Kept Ape' and *Black Dogs*, while sado-masochism and incest are described at great length.

All three novellas deal with stable, long-term relationships which contain chronic tensions and disintegrate as a result of unforeseen outside events, which shatter the ingrained patterns but only make things worse for the characters. All three end with the involvement of the police. McEwan's intention, when writing *The Cement Garden*, was to show the corrupting influence of patriarchal attitudes through society's 'smallest and most potent unit, the family' (*IG*, p. 15). It can be argued that he did this much more effectively in *The Comfort of Strangers*, where Robert's experiences in his family of origin dictate the whole outcome, while the family in *The Cement Garden* functions like a matriarchy. *Amsterdam* offers a glimpse of corruption in the patriarchal establishment of government and the media. Both incest and sado-masochism are rooted in family relationships and form the bulk of sexual deviations which are still taboo in spite of the fact that they are common. Authorities differ on the extent to which they are harmful, since a range of behaviours of various sorts can be classified under these headings. According to Ward, brother-sister incest can be quite acceptable 'giving rise, as it does, to memories of sibling genital exploration and childhood sex play. These kinds of experiences are usually not damaging'.[5] Anthony Storr states that:

> Insecure people who have been unable to achieve complete sexual happiness commonly have sexual phantasies of which they are often deeply ashamed, but which contain, albeit in exaggerated form, the elements of erotic passion which are missing from their actual sexual lives. These fantasies are generally, although not invariably, sado-masochistic in content...[6]

These benign forms of the common deviations are clearly very different from the rape of little girls by fathers or much older brothers or the gross ill-treatment of sexual partners which involves the inflicting of serious physical injury or gross humiliation.

McEwan has highlighted the connection between authoritarian political systems, patriarchal patterns in families and the joint influence of these two traditional institutions on the personality and hence the intimate relationships of individuals. There is general agreement about the link between the

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[4] Ricks, 'Adolescence and After: an Interview with Ian McEwan', p. 526.
[5] Ward, *Father/Daughter Rape*, p. 128.
[6] Storr, *Human Aggression*, p. 91.

authoritarian character and the tendency to abuse power, which can lead to parent-child incest and the sadistic ill-treatment of weaker family members, as well as to the latter's acquiescence or collusion with abuse over long periods of time. The theme of the use and abuse of power links these three novellas.[7] Pressure groups demanding political and social change have tended to undermine an admittedly imperfect order, both in the macrocosm and the microcosm, without offering a better model to replace traditional values, so that passionate believers in democracy and equality between the sexes, like McEwan, have found a need to revise some of their revolutionary views. This is not surprising, as systems which have evolved gradually tend to be based on the more stable characteristics of human nature and are not always improved by amendments, understood in theory to be more enlightened, but lacking adjustments by trial and error over centuries. *The Cement Garden* and *The Comfort of Strangers* demonstrate this from different points of view, while *Amsterdam* paints these problems across the canvas of party politics.

Jack and Julie have approximately equal power and choice and the relationship between them, although it could be classified as perverted, reads like an innocent sexual encounter between adolescent peers. It is the absence of parental authority which leads to panicky confusion and eventual disintegration of this family. The socially sanctioned marriage between Robert and Caroline is built on the traditional model of masculine supremacy but affords Robert an opportunity to exercise the power usually available to fathers, to abuse his wife who behaves like the most victimised of little girls in an incestuous family. Matters are further complicated by the example of Colin and Mary who are adult, equal in power and status, free of family ties, responsibilities and restraints and yet are unable to enjoy a carefree week of togetherness. Storr believes: 'Male sexuality, because of the primitive necessity of pursuit and penetration, does contain an important element of aggressiveness; an element which is both recognised and responded to by the female who yields and submits'.[8] It seems from this that it is Colin's exceptional gentleness which is revealed as a fear of women's insatiable lust[9] and Mary's fear of men's initiative and independence[10] that underlies their inability to surrender fully to passion. There is no information about Colin and Mary's early lives, so that their problems can not be explained, while Robert's sadistic misogyny is directly due to the influence of his dead father.

The Oedipal theme in *The Cement Garden* is announced in the first sentence of the story: 'I did

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[7] In *Amsterdam* the freedom of the press is used as an instrument of vengeance.
[8] Storr, *Human Aggression*, p. 89.
[9] In his wildest fantasy he imagines a machine which 'fucks' Mary 'on and on, for the rest of her life, till she was dead and on even after that', *The Comfort of Strangers*, p. 81.
[10] In her fantasy she wishes to 'amputate Colin's arms and legs [and] keep him in a room in her house', *Ibid.*.

not kill my father, but I sometimes felt I had helped him on his way' (*CG*, p. 9).

The characters in all three novellas live and move in environments which, like the urban slums in 'Homemade' and 'Butterflies', are projections of their inner world. In *The Cement Garden*, the children spend their time in almost complete isolation, in a large and rambling house, enclosed by a garden stifled with cement and surrounded by demolition sites. Venice, in *The Comfort of Strangers*, is equally bleak. Brief glimpses of St. Mark's Square are overshadowed by narrow empty streets where Colin and Mary get lost, in spite of maps, and are 'stalked' by a stranger. The hospital, the police station and the cemetery are not the usual landmarks remembered by tourists. McEwan explained that he had described the environment 'in terms of a state of mind and vice versa' (*NI*, p. 177). He seems to return to this in *Amsterdam*. Here too there is a hotel, an airport, a police station and a morgue. The only features which distinguish it from any European city are the legalised freedoms to buy drugs and arrange euthanasia. The other settings in this story are curiously isolated and soulless. In spite of the opulent furnishings of private luxury properties, in smart districts of London, the characters live alone and fear that they may die alone. Clive has given up having guests to stay in his many rooms. George and Molly lived in a large house with separate entrances and a lockable door between his and her apartments so that visiting friends never met their partner. Lisa Jardine writes: 'while this is the sort of novel that wins prizes, his characters remain curiously soulless amidst the twists and turns of plot'.[11]

After finishing *The Cement Garden* McEwan tried to get away from the claustrophobic atmosphere of his fiction and made his 'move abroad' but found himself 'drawn again into a very private world...where psychological states...became...important' (*NI*, p. 173). The focus of both stories is on intimate interpersonal relationships. It seems that his intellectual ruminations on the nature of evil in the world recalled him to 'the time of the fathers' (*NI*, p. 179) and to what Andrew Billen called McEwan's vision of 'centuries of mad, bad male sexual oppression'.[12] *The Cement Garden* arrived suddenly in his mind 'at the doodling stage' while *The Comfort of Strangers* was written 'in the most lugubrious way possible' (*NI*, p. 170), after an incubation period of at least eighteen months. This is not surprising, since most of the elements that make up *The Cement Garden* had been in McEwan's mind for a long time and had been rehearsed in several short stories, while *The Comfort of Strangers* broke new ground in an attempt to elucidate the most difficult aspects of sexual functioning. To describe these, he needed to rely heavily on his imagination: 'I would finish one chapter and have no

[11] Lisa Jardine, *A Glance: 'Amsterdam': Amazon.com.* (http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0...238/auguststrinberg/002-5491242-8327653).
[12] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.

idea what to do with the next. I felt that I would never finish, because the novel was giving me so much personal pain' (*NI*, p. 170). This may reflect the amount of unconscious material which needed to be recovered from a considerable depth to aid him in his self-appointed task to address:

> the nature of the unconscious...It wasn't enough to be rational, since there might be desires - masochism in women, sadism in men - which act out the oppression of women or patriarchal societies but which have actually become related to sources of pleasure. (*NI*, p. 178)

As Anthony Storr has said:

> coming to terms with infantile aggression and sexuality which has been repressed is a painful and difficult process, attended by considerable fear and anxiety. To assimilate what is projected is as difficult as to discard what is introjected.[13]

In sharp contrast, *Amsterdam* was billed as: 'more lighthearted...McEwan wrote it almost in one sitting as a reaction to the depressing subject of his previous novel'.[14] The lightheartedness may be due to the fact that, unlike the early novellas, which delved deep into the author's unconscious, *Amsterdam* developed in his mind from a joke:

> The novel really came out of a private joke between me and a psychiatrist friend. We'd been talking about [pre-senile dementia] and I said 'If I get it, then get me to Amsterdam and finish me off.' And he said 'Okay, as long as you do the same for me.'...It was just a silly joke.[15]

The fantasy on which *The Cement Garden* is based goes back to McEwan's pre-boarding school experience when: 'For years I had daydreamed of grown-ups conveniently and painlessly dissolved...leaving me and a handful of competent friends to surmount dangers without ever being called in to tea'.[16] This happy fantasy, based on Enid Blyton's books for children[17] and involving freedom and adventure, was distorted by later experiences. McEwan readily admits the influence of Golding's *Lord of the Flies,* where 'things went wrong in a most horrible and interesting way'. He recalls:

> years later, when I came to write a novel myself, I could not resist the momentum of my childhood fantasies nor the power of Golding's model...I had no doubt that my children would suffer from, rather than exalt in, their freedom.[18]

It is also possible that McEwan's fantasies of losing his parents and joining a group of orphaned children are connected with imaginings of Bernard's life in the Children's Home. Although he has always insisted that his father was very loving and told Megan Tresidder that his childhood had been

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[13] Anthony Storr, *The Integrity of the Personality* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1963) p. 90.
[14] Anon, *Featured Author: Ian McEwan: American Book Center* (http://www.abc.nl/basement/hansj/text/mcewan.html).
[15] Brendan Bernhard, *Ian McEwan After 'Amsterdam': L.A. Weekly* (http://www.laweekly.com:80/ink/99/10/books-bernhard.shtml).
[16] McEwan, 'The Unforgettable Momentum of a Childhood Fantasy', p. 15.
[17] In his boyhood McEwan had read 'every word that Enid Blyton had written...When the public libraries began the move against Enid Blyton, [he] was pleased to think that [he] had grown up on the subversive work of a banned author', 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[18] McEwan, 'The Unforgettable Momentum of a Childhood Fantasy', p. 15.

'quite merry', he admitted that his father 'frightened him', although he added that he 'was a rather timid child and so...might have feared any father'.[19] In discussing the cultural differences in the freedom to express aggression, Storr writes: 'The man who, in working-class Glasgow, might be considered no more than normally aggressive would, in Belgravia or South Kensington, be regarded as brutish and violent'.[20] A boy's problem in acquiring a masculine identity when the father can not be used as a model is one of the threads that runs through much of McEwan's fiction. Maurice Bridgeland holds that men whose fathers are particularly difficult to identify with (violent, distant, authoritarian, ineffectual) have great problems in relationships and are the most reluctant to accept women as equals.[21] The family in *The Cement Garden* have just such a father and Jack, at fourteen, and Tom, at six, have severe problems with their masculine identity. The father is described as a 'frail, irascible, obsessive man' (*CG*, p. 9), who drops dead at the end of the first chapter. McEwan said that the mother's death, the relationships between the four children and Tom's regression and cross-dressing arrived simultaneously and spontaneously in his imagination, but that after a sleep and a false start he 'realised that the beginning really belonged with the father' (*NI*, p. 170). The father's absence is experienced as a relief by everyone in the family, his funeral is not mentioned and Jack quickly erases 'his impression in the soft, fresh concrete' (*CG*, p. 18). The concrete, which is the ruling symbol of father's stifling rigidity, continues to incarcerate the family with their secrets and isolate them from the world: 'The cement garden...serves as an apt symbol for the new lives of the four children...just as the plane of cement smothers everything beneath it, the parentless life begins to stifle the children' (*Slay*, p. 40). It is 'the outsider', Derek (the man who hopes to take father's place), who finally breaks the intolerable tension. Even he needs a sledgehammer and the support of the masculine authority of the police, so that in a way, the end belongs with the father too.

McEwan speaks of identification or sympathy with all the male characters in *The Cement Garden* except the father. It is clear that Tom enacts some of the author's own childhood memories: 'Tom turned in the cot and shouted, "Go away! You go away!" Julie laughed and ruffled his hair' (*CG*, p. 102). McEwan recalled his father's reappearance at home at weekends and quotes himself as saying, 'Mummy, send that man away'.[22] Tom's announcement that he wants to be a girl (*CG*, p. 43) parallels a similar announcement by McEwan: 'Aged eight, he came downstairs saying: "Please, I want to be a

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[19] Tresidder, 'The Dreamer Who Creates Nightmares', p. 2.
[20] Storr, *Human Aggression*, p. 87.
[21] Bridgeland, 'Sexual Deviation', p. 1.
[22] Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', p. 9.

girl'".[23] These examples illustrate the projection of almost unchanged personal memories into characters who are struggling with rivalry with their fathers. The reader learns that 'Tom was scared of his father' (*CG*, p. 12) and Julie explains: 'now Father was a semi-invalid he would have to compete with Tom for Mother's attention..."Tom, [will win]...and Dad'll take it out on him"' (*CG*, p. 13). Tom's identification with his father is spoilt by the latter's inappropriate treatment of him: 'he was strict with Tom...He used Mother against Tom much as he used his pipe against her' (*CG*, p. 13). Maurice Bridgeland (a specialist in the treatment of adolescent problems) states that: 'Boys who...are confused about their sexual relationships may...seek to merge themselves into the power of the mother - as girls can do'.[24] Tom clings to his mother during her illness and later finds a mother-substitute in Julie. His identification with the female role is typical of transsexual rather than transvestite aberration. Bridgeland regards transsexualism as a condition which arises from either 'the total surrender to female power or the desire to possess it'.[25]

Jack is reluctant to identify wholeheartedly with his father because of his father's obsessional personality, but imitates his mannerisms when he wants to appear manly: 'I was sitting on the front step re-reading a comic...I wished I had been reading the racing page of my father's paper, or the football results' (*CG*, p. 9). Jack's father fits Erich Fromm's description of the authoritarian character: 'He admires authority and tends to submit to it, but at the same time he wants to be an authority himself and have others submit to him'.[26] Jack is unconscious of his own rivalry with his father and finds Tom's predicament 'an extraordinary idea...So simple, so bizarre, a small boy and a grown man competing' (*CG*, p 13). He enjoys jokes at his father's expense and complies with his rules reluctantly, but needs to distance himself from his mother and, at fourteen, feels 'proudly beyond her control' (*CG*, p. 20). When McEwan recalled the emptiness of his years at school and his shyness, awkwardness and lack of confidence during his adolescence, he agreed that he had 'something of [Jack's]...lack of a sure grip on the world',[27] but sympathised with Derek, because he was 'a sort of only child' (*NI*, p. 171). He recalled the circumstances of writing his first novella:

> [Hamilton] started an occasional series in which writers reminisced about family life - ...I promised to contribute, but after a week I was stuck. When I complained that I was finding it difficult to write the truth about my family, he said curtly: 'Make it up'. This was how I began...[28]

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[23] Anon, 'Master of the Short, Sharp Shock', p. 32.
[24] Bridgeland, 'Sexual Deviation', p. 2.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 141.
[27] Tresidder, 'The Dreamer Who Creates Nightmares', p. 2.
[28] McEwan, 'Wild Man of Literature (c 1976)', p. 16.

He volunteered that: 'Another source of the novel was my wife's childhood' (*NI*, p. 171). This throw-away comment made in 1983 is of great interest because, after his acrimonious divorce from Penny Allen, she complained that McEwan: 'used names and people in my life and the book [*The Cement Garden*] has got a lot to do with my childhood'.[29]

This story may include comparatively recent personal memories. The tender and romantic description of the loss of virginity between two adolescents must have been very important, as it is repeated from 'First Love, Last Rites':

> We pressed our palms together, she made a careful examination of the size and shape of our hands...Exactly the same size, your fingers are thicker, you've got this extra bit here. (*FLLR*, p. 89)

This is satirised in 'Reflections of a Kept Ape' as: 'The long prelude of mutual exploration...Her playful observations on the length, colour, texture of my member' (*IBS*, p. 33) and reappears in *The Cement Garden* as:

> I took her hand and measured it against mine. It was exactly the same. We sat up and compared the lines on our palms, and these were entirely different. We began a long investigation of each other's body. (*CG*, p. 125)

There may be some real basis in adult memory for the descriptions of squalor and disorder into which groups of adolescents degenerate in the absence of rules for day-to-day living and of adults to enforce them. McEwan's bohemian days, when he lived in a bus with friends, may have been spent in what Quentin Curtis called 'a scratch-and-sniff' environment.[30] They too are remarkably constant. The dark and filthy kitchen in 'Last Day of Summer', which Jenny cleans up on arrival, is like the bed-sitting room in which the protagonist and Sissel make their home in 'First Love, Last Rites': 'Our room stank...our rubbish gathered around us, milk bottles...grey sweating cheese, butter wrappers, yogurt cartons, over-ripe salami' (*FLLR*, p. 93). In *The Cement Garden* a similar description of decay appears: 'It was not long before the kitchen was a place of stench and clouds of flies. None of us felt like doing anything about it beyond keeping the kitchen door shut' (*CG*, p. 67). Even the rats reappear in the cellar, this time gnawing the mother's remains, while the smell of her decomposing body gradually permeates the house.

Jack's feelings towards his sister would be normal and safe in a nuclear family where the parents set limits, exercise control, are seen to belong to one another and forbid sexual games among

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[29] Mark Lawson comments in this article that 'no ordinary reader will have read *The Cement Garden* as a closet biography of the writer's wife', Mark Lawson, 'Sex, Lies and the Metafictional Texture', *The Guardian* (20 Sept. 1997), p. 22.

[30] Quentin Curtis, 'Sweet Smell of Quiet Success: There's Something Rotten About *The Cement Garden*. But That's How McEwan Meant It to Be', *The Independent On Sunday* (24 Oct. 1993), p. 27.

the children. It is only when the mother dies that Jack (and Tom) transfer their Oedipal longings onto Julie. Jack's deliberate cultivation of physical repulsiveness may spring from a need to maintain a distance between himself and his sisters, especially as the isolation of the family allowed the three older children to continue their childhood games of 'doctors and nurses' comparatively late into their latency period.

Their mother leaves an injunction that the family should stay together at all costs: 'Julie and you will have to be in charge...Both of you...It's not fair to leave it all to her' (*CG*, p. 47). This establishes an artificial generation gap between the two elder and the two younger children and confirms Jack and Julie in the role of substitute parents, but fails to acknowledge their budding sexuality: 'The love-making, then, is a comparatively positive experience...incest in this novel is nothing more than a need to share, a need to love' (*Slay*, p. 46). Their incestuous act can be seen as an attempt to keep their parents alive by becoming them and joining forces against the outsider, Derek, who carries the burden of negative transference from the father. Julie manipulates the scenario in which Derek finds her and Jack in bed naked, while Tom sleeps in a cot in their room. He is shocked into action and puts an end to their hopeless situation. Anthony Storr found in his work with patients that:

> sexual play with contemporaries whether consanguineous or not, is...common...it is not ...incest itself which is...damaging, but rather an emotional situation in which a child is exploited by an older and more powerful person.[31]

The novellas attracted some positive comments:

> *The Cement Garden* (1978) is little more than a long short story but an extra fifty pages would ruin it...The sharp, meagre outlines are sufficient...There is a sense in which the self-absorbed family of *The Cement Garden*, the remote, abstracted couple of *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981) exist as a single point halfway along a high, invisible trajectory.[32]

The reception of *The Cement Garden*, and to a lesser extent *The Comfort of Strangers*,[33] was marred by vocal if unsubstantiated accusations of plagiarism: 'Several reviewers noted a remarkable similarity between...*The Cement Garden* and Julian Gloag's *Our Mother's House* (1963)' (*Slay*, p. 36). Gloag himself claimed that McEwan had 'stolen his ideas' (*Slay*, p. 36).[34] McEwan recalled the need to defend himself against these accusations: 'The plots did resemble each other but then plots often do...But they're very different books...you work hard on a novel and then suddenly the only issue is the extent to which it's like another novel'.[35] He visited this bitter experience on the composer in

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[31] Anthony Storr, *The Integrity of the Personality* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1963). p. 96.
[32] Taylor, 'Ian McEwan: Standing Up for the Sisters', p. 55.
[33] McEwan claimed that he had neither read *Don't Look Now*, nor seen the film, Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview*, p. 177.
[34] In 1981 Gloag published *Lost and Found*, a novel about a winner of the 'Prix Goncourt', who's book was written by someone else.
[35] Amanda Smith, 'PW Interviews', *Publishers Weekly* (11 Sept. 1987), p. 69.

Amsterdam, Clive Linley, whose Birmingham premiere is: 'Cancelled...Giulio Bo says it's a dud. Half the BSO refuse to play it. Apparently there's a tune at the end, shameless copy of Beethoven's Ode to Joy, give or take a note or two' (*A*, p. 176). The reception of *The Comfort of Strangers* was very mixed. It was nominated for the Booker Prize before it had been released by the publishers. However, it attracted more negative reviews than any of his previous work: '[*The Comfort of Strangers*] starts with tingles, promises true shivers and the catharsis of shock, and delivers only gore...It is an unsatisfying suspense-horror, even for an upscale beach read, and therefore quite hateful';[36] 'a sad disappointment';[37] 'definitely diseased'.[38] Ambiguous comments like Lewis Jones's: '[It] is short, it is about sex and it is excellent',[39] seem to ignore McEwan's serious intention to explore the roots of patriarchal evil influences. The notable exception is James Campbell:

> Men's ancient dreams of hurting and women's of being hurt may indeed distort the truth, but even if men and women could awaken from these dreams the truth could not be conceived simply. What seals the fate of the wretched Colin and Mary is that they suppose that it can be.[40]

McEwan makes an effort to move away from 'adolescent anxiety, snot and pimples' (*NI*, p. 173). He now describes a somewhat too clean, too hygienic, too polite and claustrophobic relationship between two young adults. There is no concrete to stifle them. Indeed they are free to travel abroad and lead interesting lives at home. The tense atmosphere here comes from the effort to be as alike as possible and never hurt each other. This is an overcompensation for violent repressed hatred, lurid sadistic fantasies and death wishes. However, nothing negative or morally or aesthetically suspect is ever expressed between them, until they come into contact with Robert and Caroline:

> A constant image recurring in his work is the man-woman couple so tightly tangled together and at the same time so confused about sexual difference that an act of violence by a third party is required to allow the protagonists to separate...The problems of these couples are exacerbated by their belief in gender as an essential characteristic.[41]

The real memories in *The Comfort of Strangers* came from the week in 1978 which McEwan spent with Penny Allen in Venice at the height of the tourist season (*NI*, p. 177). It is clear that, although the characters are 'not quite like either [McEwan] or Penny' (*NI*, p. 177), there are at least superficial similarities between them. McEwan described Colin and Mary as 'two creatures of the head' (*NI*, p. 180) and referred to them as a 'decently liberal and slightly tired couple' (*NI*, p. 179). They have what

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[36] Eliot Fremont-Smith, 'Dearth in Venice', *Village Voice* (15 July 1981), p. 32.
[37] Richard Martin, '*The Comfort of Strangers*', *American Book Review* (Nov. 1982), p 23.
[38] John Leonard, 'Books of the Times: *The Comfort of Strangers*', *New York Times* (15 June 1981), p. 14.
[39] Lewis Jones, 'More Filth', *Spectator* (24 Oct. 1981), p. 24.
[40] James Campbell, 'Dreams of Pain', *New Statesman* (9 Oct. 1981), p. 23.
[41] Michele Roberts, 'Split Personalities: *Enduring Love* by Ian McEwan', *The Independent* (30 Aug. 1997), p. 6.

passes for a good relationship, although there are hints of commitment problems. They are careful to keep untidy and negative aspects of life out of their consciousness and especially out of the relationship between them.[42] On the surface, they present an enviable solution to the problem of balancing the opposites of independence versus attachment and freedom versus safety. The facade of intimacy is maintained through physical contact and refined non-verbal communication:

> This was no longer a great passion. Its pleasures were in its unhurried friendliness, the familiarity of its rituals and procedures, the secure, precision-fit of limbs and bodies, comfortable, like a cast returned to its mould. (*CS*, p. 18)

It does not surprise the reader to hear that: 'They would have denied indignantly that they were bored' (*CS*, p. 18). With the attrition of passion, Mary could say: 'She loved him, though not at this particular moment' (*CS*, p. 15). The reader is in no doubt that each of them would be having a much better holiday alone, or with someone altogether different.

There is no reason to suppose that Penny Allen and McEwan had reached this stage of staleness in their relationship, especially as they later married. Until 1997 they presented a united front and gave visiting reporters the impression of idyllic family life. However, after McEwan won the Booker Prize, Sarah Oliver, who seems to be in possession of inside information about their relationship over the years, published an article revealing that:

> The couple met in Norwich in 1975 where he was doing an MA and she was doing a literature degree. Both were married. They met again 18 months later when Penny had left her husband and Ian his first wife. But he became involved with another woman for some time...She lived with him for a while...and left him for 18 months. They came back together but did not marry until 1982.[43]

This holiday in Venice may have been one of several reunions after protracted separations. Seven years (the length of Mary and Colin's affair) seems to fit the time of McEwan's stop-go affair with Penny before their marriage in 1982. It is also the length of time for which Clarissa and Joe, in *Enduring Love*, were married before their separation.

By 1980, McEwan came to believe that sado-masochism, which appeared in the short stories as purely individual and idiosyncratic, was widespread and that the 'very carefully constructed rational view' even of male and female feminists like Colin and Mary and 'their sort of balance' was in danger of becoming 'undone, because they hadn't ever addressed the matter at a deeper level of themselves; they've always seen it as a social matter' (*NI*, p. 179). The Mary in 'Psychopolis' (also a feminist)

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[42] Joe and Clarissa, in *Enduring Love*, are still doing this seventeen years later.
[43] Sarah Oliver, 'The Strange Story of a Wife Who Gives Birth While Her Husband's Mistress Watches...and Why it Shocks the Booker Prize Winner', *The Mail on Sunday* (1 Nov. 1998), p. 46.

prevails on the protagonist to chain 'her by the foot to [his] bed for the whole week-end' (*IBS*, p. 103). As the narrator has no corresponding fantasy of his own, he is troubled by guilt and fear: 'I admit she frightened me...I...hurried out on to the balcony...and concentrated on being blameless' (*IBS*, p. 103). He learned nothing from this experience and 'did not even know whether this was an ideological or psycho-sexual matter' (*IBS*, p. 105). Without a sadist to engage, the masochist is powerless, and vice-versa. The precise opposite situation is described in *The Innocent* where Maria simply throws the potential sadist out as soon as the bullying starts. Somewhere between 1978 and 1981, McEwan came to realise that sado-masochism is a two-handed game in which both partners collude and take up complementary roles. He was explicit about this: 'What is interesting is the extent to which people will collude in their own subjection, which is true not only of Caroline in relation to Robert but also of Colin' (*NI*, p. 181). McEwan speaks of: 'an unconscious contractual agreement [which] can exist between oppressor and victim' (*NI*, p. 181). This may be unconscious in the protagonists but McEwan must be conscious of it to be able to write about it and suggests that: 'the ideal reader has to recognise within himself or herself that area of lack of freedom in a relationship' (*NI*, p. 181). There is some truth in Claire Armitstead's comment that: 'Dress it as he may in the dialectic of sexual politics, McEwan's eye for the charisma of perversion is wide open'.[44] Mary and Colin are stuck in their superficial togetherness which does not reach the depth where their real emotions live. The reader learns later that Mary wants to reduce Colin to a helpless object and 'use him exclusively for sex, sometimes lending him out to friends' (*CS*, p. 81). There is a close parallel here between Mary's fantasies and Robert's treatment of Caroline. Mary and Colin conjure up 'a *stranger* for whom they're getting dressed' (*NI*, p. 181) and when they meet Robert and Caroline, the repressed 'desires' are set free so that 'they become Robert and Caroline' (*NI*, p. 180).

All these characters seem to behave like sleep-walkers who have disconnected their judgement and are passively following a prepared script from long ago. Colin and Mary's somnambulant passion wakens to vivid life when they 'become mesmerised by Robert and Caroline in ways they could not speak about' (*NI*, p. 179). Their sharing of sado-masochistic fantasies renews their interest in each other: 'they woke surprised to find themselves in each other's arms' (*CS*, p. 77), 'They clung to each other, in talk as in sex' (*CS*, p. 81). McEwan asserts that:

> it would be far better in a relationship to embrace this [factor] than to deny it, and that true freedom would be for such women to recognise their masochism and to understand how

[44] Claire Armitstead, 'Review of 'Strangers' at the Old Red Lion', *The Financial Times* (10 Jan. 1989), p. 19.

it had become related to sexual pleasure. (*NI*, p. 178)

This does not hold true, at least in the story. Mary and Colin, after their amazing personal revelations and their deeply fulfilling sexual experiences, still return to Robert and Caroline's flat to meet their doom. Robert has sophisticated insight into the aetiology of his sadism, but it does not prevent him from crippling Caroline or murdering Colin.

McEwan does not offer any personal material which demonstrates sado-masochistic tendencies. There is scant information about bullying and 'sexual hell' in boarding school but this does not seem to belong with heterosexual relationships. Psychodynamic models hold that the roots of sado-masochism reach to the anal phase of infantile development (between 18 months and 3 years) and are related to the confusion between sex and power or fantasies of the sex act between adults as aggressive domination of the female, carried out with the ruthlessness of the toddler. Echoes of this can be found in Leonard's failed attempt to rape Maria in *The Innocent*.

In *The Comfort of Strangers*, the emphasis is on Caroline's complicity and enjoyment of tyrannical abuse and Mary's secret sharing in this. The search for possible elements from the unconscious brings the enquiry to the connection between Julie, in *The Cement Garden*, and Mary in *The Comfort of Strangers*, who may have carried the transference for the anima figure, who is experienced as very powerful and may represent a composite figure who is sister/mother/lover and soul mate, so that sexual union with her may have symbolised, at a physical level, the integration of the masculine and feminine aspects of the author himself. Apart from Penny Allen, more remote prototypes for this figure may exist in the unconscious. In this context it is of interest to note that McEwan frequently stresses his only child status. In fact, his mother had a son and daughter from a previous marriage, the younger of whom was eleven years old when McEwan was born. These step-siblings must have been adolescent during McEwan's formative years. He refers to them only in passing to say that: 'because they both married fairly young and because the family was often abroad, they were not around much while I was growing up'.[45] They may well have been around when he was three and have been tempted to 'steal [the] youngest to babyfy' (*NI*, p. 170), rather like the landlady's daughter in *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration*, Julie and Susan in *The Cement Garden* or even Kate in *The Daydreamer*.[46]

The crime and punishment scene, in Robert's family of origin, revolves around the adolescent

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[45] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[46] McEwan informed Phil Daoust that he won a 'beautiful baby' competition in 1948, at the age of three months, in 'Post-Shock Traumatic: Profile of Ian McEwan', p. 6.

sisters, who help themselves to their mother's things in the parents' absence: 'First they painted their fingernails...They put creams and powders on their faces...[They] put on stockings from my mother's drawer' (*CS*, p. 33). This is a common misdeed but hardly amounts to a crime. Fathers, especially stepfathers, are notoriously sensitive to their adolescent daughters' budding sexuality. McEwan had already dealt with this theme in 'In Between the Sheets' and here it reappears as the cause of the father's anger. It also highlights the mother's inferior status in the family as she does nothing to mitigate the father's punishment.

Scaled down to normal life, the formative experiences which underlie Robert's relationship with his family can be interpreted as the memories of a somewhat spoilt little boy, his father's only son, who tells tales about his adolescent sisters helping themselves to the trappings of the mother's femininity, which are a potent signal of sexual invitation to the father. Angry fathers are not necessarily cruel or sadistic but at the age of three or four, a timid little boy may well have been terrified enough by an outburst of paternal displeasure to repress the incident, particularly if at other times the father was perceived as loving and supportive. Some manipulation and residual guilt may have been involved because of the effort to excuse the tale-bearing even at this enormous remove: 'I believed he knew everything, like God...So, there was no point in lying. I told him everything' (*CS*, p. 34). Fear of the father's anger is central in these traumatic descriptions and Maurice Bridgeland states that: 'angry, violent fathers can either be rejected as models or internalised for later use'.[47] It seems as if Robert had chosen the second option and Jack the first.

The collusion of the sisters in a scenario to get the 'little traitor' into trouble with his father may have similar, mundane roots. Minor and infrequent events can be exaggerated and expanded to form the basis of an image of a family tyrant, loved and feared, worshipped and imitated which McEwan creates to explain Robert's sadism. Robert uses the mechanism of 'identification with the aggressor'.[48] McEwan's insistence that Robert is a 'cipher' (*NI*, p. 180) emphasises his wish to disassociate himself from him. However, the amount of time and space devoted to Robert in the narrative and the detailed exposition of his childhood, ensure that he comes across as a believable character. Anthony Storr holds that: 'A study of those people whom one most dislikes is a rewarding if painful task; for such a study reveals projected, and hence unadmitted, parts of one's own personality'.[49] Robert claims that he was very close to his mother and seems to have had a ready means of intruding on and disrupting his

[47] Bridgeland, 'Sexual Deviation', p. 3.
[48] This is seen again in Jeremy's attitude to the Nazi atrocities in *Black Dogs*.
[49] Storr, *The Integrity of the Personality*, p. 90.

parents' bedroom privacy by nightmares and demands for drinks of water. This Oedipal paradise was brought to an end by his sisters' spiteful manipulation. He learned by his father's example to mistrust and abuse women, especially his sisters, who were much older than himself. Maurice Bridgeland writes:

> Men hate women for much the same reason that they love them. This is of course about power. One does not have to be a Kleinian to appreciate that in the first few months of life, a mother has supreme power - the power to give and the power to withhold, the power to comfort and the power to neglect, the power to accept and the power to reject. During childhood this power is modified, particularly during the battles of the anal period but the child still knows that the mother is both the witch and the fairy godmother. She is the person who decides what is right and what is wrong, what is allowed and what is forbidden - and to the child these decisions are arbitrary (since he cannot know the reason) and are often inconsistent.[50]

Robert's hatred of his sisters was boosted by their resentment of his position as the father's favourite and fostered by the demand that Robert should report their secret misdeeds, so that their father could inflict savage punishment. The claim that Robert, and by implication Robert's father, is 'a sort of cartoon figure of extreme patriarchal domination' (*NI*, p. 180) suggests that their actions represent grossly exaggerated and somewhat distorted memories of real events. If Jack's father had an authoritarian streak, Robert's father and Robert himself are the complete manifestations of the domestic tyrant. McEwan's identification with Colin is quite explicit:

> I felt very strongly identified with Colin, as if I was writing my own death in some strange way. I felt terribly sickened by it. Part of me did not want to go on, and another part of me was ambitious...and delighted by the writing. (*NI*, p. 183)

Robert's hatred of Colin is not clear in the story. The reader hears more about his obsession with Colin's beauty, his need to confide in him by sharing painful, personal memories and his wish for physical contact with him than about any negative feelings he may harbour: 'Robert held Colin's hand tightly, the fingers interlocking and exerting a constant pressure' (*CS*, p. 100). Both McEwan and Haffenden are careful to avoid discussions of homosexuality and Slay comments:

> Surprisingly, the focus of their united attention is Colin - one would think that Robert's blatant machismo would dictate that the third party be a woman...It is not the gender of the third that matters but the thrill of the murder that promises ecstasy. (*Slay*, p. 85)

This fits well with Fromm's statement that: 'For the authoritarian character there exist, so to speak, two sexes: the powerful ones and the powerless ones'.[51] Bridgeland holds that: 'In contrast to transsexualism, transvestism and effeminate homosexuality are based on 'castration anxiety' and are

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[50] Bridgeland, 'Sexual Deviation', p. 1.
[51] Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 145.

characterised by intrapsychic conflict.[52] This corresponds to a description of Colin (Tom's straightforward transsexual wishes hold no conflict). Colin is an effeminate male who has few masculine attributes. He espouses mildly feminist political and domestic attitudes and has passive feminine longings: 'Colin said that he had long envied women's orgasms, and that there were times when he felt an aching emptiness, close to desire, between his scrotum and his anus' (*CS*, p. 79). In Jung's terminology, he is 'possessed by his anima'. He can no more free himself from his enslavement to Mary's moods and wishes than the protagonist in 'Reflections of a Kept Ape'. He allows himself to be dominated, fondled and physically assaulted by Robert. His anxious fantasy that Mary may drown herself can be interpreted as an unconscious wish. He identifies with masochistic women, surrenders to sadistic men and attaches himself to strong, 'animus possessed' women like Mary.

The women and girls in both novellas, with the exception of Caroline, fare much better than the men and boys because of their greater ease of identification with the feminine role which they all perceive as conferring power. Caroline, who has identity problems, seems to have drowned her personality in Robert. Masochistic strivings spring from 'feelings of inferiority, powerlessness [and] individual insignificance',[53] while masochistic dependency is often 'conceived as love or loyalty'.[54] Caroline rationalises her painful enslavement as an expression of love: 'By 'in love' I mean that you'd do anything for the other person, and...you'd let them do anything to you' (*CS*, p 63). Caroline's acquiescence in male dominance and her identification with Robert in his sadism is made clear in her reply to Mary's statement: '"presumably you'd be prepared to kill the person you're 'in love' with?"..."Oh yes, if I was the man I would"' (*CS*, p. 63). According to Erich Fromm:

> An attitude of complete self-denial for the sake of another person and the surrender of one's own rights and claims to another person have been praised as examples of 'Great Love'...Sadism also appears frequently under the disguise of love. To rule over another person...for that person's own sake.[55]

The early novellas are a vehicle for McEwan's conscious opinions about the nature of the relationship between evil, sexuality and early childhood influences, but they also contain unconscious material struggling into partial awareness. There are no answers here, only questions which shape themselves with increasing clarity, so that it is not surprising that these themes recur again and again in McEwan's later novels. Grief, apparently absent in most of the short stories, is left near the surface in 'Last Day of Summer' and *The Cement Garden*, and explicitly postponed at the end of *The Comfort of Strangers*.

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[52] Bridgeland, 'Sexual Deviation', p. 5.
[53] Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 122.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Amsterdam is the latest of McEwan's novellas, published in September 1998. It is dealt with here because it shows his return to this medium after a long excursion into novels and films. He revisits some of the territory explored in the late 70s from the perspective of twenty years of successful writing and the divorce which ended the relationship behind both the early novellas. John Keenan writes: 'In *Amsterdam* the tone is light, but the accent nevertheless is on discord, betrayal, selfishness and death'.[56] The classical McEwan themes are reworked once more, with the difference that they are played by conspicuously successful, middle-aged men, who have acquired wealth and fame, have lived through marriages, divorces and many love-affairs and have the power to influence current events. McEwan, who often presents the creative artist as a writer, now chooses a composer because, as he told Brendan Bernhard, 'I've always wanted to get inside the mind of a composer'.[57] It seems that Berlioz was his model, because he wrote: 'I've been looking for a composer who writes well about his craft and has some good stories to tell. I'm reliably informed that Berlioz is the man. I'll be taking his Memoirs [on holiday].[58] Tom's cross-dressing reappears as the life-long sexual deviation of the foreign secretary, which, when made public, brings about his ruin.

Although Molly's body is respectably cremated, the equivalent of the bad smell from the sarcophagus in the cellar emanates, albeit symbolically, from her remains and poisons the friendships among her lovers. The theme of incest can be discerned in the claustrophobic relationships between the male characters who move like satellites trapped in her orbit, once shared her sexual favours and still nurse rivalries and ambivalence towards her. Secrecy, betrayal and the corruption of innocence is again to the fore. Sado-masochism is evident in the destructiveness and envious spoiling of each other's lives and the characters' thoughtless, or perhaps unconscious, inviting of disaster by trusting Molly and each other with incriminating secrets, which they use like weapons against each other. The sado-masochism in *Amsterdam* is not specifically sexual. It expresses itself in cutting remarks, the hurling of verbal excrement, the exposure of rivals to the shame of public humiliation and character assassination: 'I see you once said in a speech that Nelson Mandela deserved to be hanged' (*A*, p. 15) and again: 'The very last time I saw Molly she told me you were impotent and always had been' (*A*, p. 16). According to Erich Fromm destructiveness is always linked with sado-masochistic tendencies: 'In sadism the hostility is usually more conscious and directly expressed in action, while in masochism the hostility is mostly

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[56] John Keenan, 'Foreign Affairs of the Heart', *The Guardian* (5 Sept. 1998), p. 8.
[57] Brendan Bernhard, *Ian McEwan After 'Amsterdam': L.A. Weekly* (http://www.laweekly.com:80/ink/99/10/books-bernhard.shtml).
[58] Ian McEwan, 'Summer Reading', *The Financial Times* (5 July 1997), p. 5.

unconscious and finds an indirect expression.[59]

Jack failed in the tasks of adolescence, Colin in the tasks of manhood and Clive, Vernon and Garmony come to grief in their middle age after much conspicuous success: '*Amsterdam* contains acute insights into how essentially moral men can be poisoned by public life'.[60] McEwan attributes this to:

> the overreaching ambition, the self-delusion and the self-importance that afflicts men of about my age as they become successful and respected...Everyone makes space around them. The arena is empty for them to damn themselves.[61]

From the point of view of psychodynamic interpretations, these three novellas emphasise the differences between the maturational crises of adolescence and mid-life. Parents have disappeared from the stage and such children as are mentioned are adult. The characters come face-to-face with the realities of ageing, illness, loss of competence in the world and the approach of death. McEwan told William Leith: 'I used to think, madly, in my teens and early twenties, "I know it happens to everybody, but I don't think it's going to happen to me. I have a feeling I'm different...might just escape"'.[62] Sex and death are experienced differently than they were in youth. Masturbation had occupied the bulk of Jack's waking life and energy and haunted his dreams:

> In a large armchair at the side of my bed sat my mother staring at me with huge, hollow eyes...'I'm not doing anything', I said, and noticed as I glanced down that there were no clothes on the bed and that I was naked and masturbating in front of her. (*CG*, p. 87)

When Vernon awakes, alone in his bed:

> His nakedness against the sheet, the wanton tangle of bedclothes by his ankle and the sight of his own genitalia...sent vague sexual thoughts floating across his mind...He rolled onto his side and wondered whether he had it in him to masturbate... (*A*, p. 100)

A guilty preoccupation has now become a boring activity. The loss of virginity, which in *The Cement Garden* forms the climax of the whole novella, happened too long ago to deserve a mention and both wives and mistresses are busy with their own careers.

The long-term consequences of sexual promiscuity are hinted at in the fact that Molly dies of a disease of the central nervous system which may have been tertiary syphilis. The sexually transmitted nature of her illness is strongly hinted at in the fear of infection that both Clive and Vernon give way to after her death. It is well known that syphilis is infectious only in the primary and secondary stages and becomes latent for many years before the neurological symptoms make their appearance.[63] Shortly

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[59] Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 137.
[60] Jeremy Gavron, 'Poisoned by Public Life', *The Financial Times* (29 Aug. 1998), p. 5.
[61] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 8.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[63] Syphilis occurs in three stages -primary, secondary and tertiary. It may be almost completely latent during it's long course which may last for over thirty years. The incubation period is about 10 days to 10 weeks. The secondary stage comes on in about six months and the second latent period may last for two to thirty years. Follow up studies show that about 66% of cases subsequently develop overt manifestations of

after Molly's funeral, both her ex-lovers experience symptoms which often herald the beginning of tertiary syphilis and Clive shows at least one episode of poor discernment together with the feeling that he is a genius. Loss of judgement combined with delusions of grandeur is typical of neuro-syphilis. Of course, fleeting mental and physical symptoms are not uncommon in hysteria, and this can be brought about by any stress or trauma. It seems as if McEwan has left Molly's diagnosis open to speculation.

Death, which in the early novellas was the fate of parents or came as an unexpected, violent and bloody outrage, becomes in *Amsterdam* the accepted inevitable end of life, one's own and that of one's contemporaries. This realisation brings dread of the actual process of dying, fear of prolonged suffering, anxieties about the loss of faculties and the spectre of undignified dependence on others. These preoccupations are realistic and even dreams no longer point to repressed material but present 'simply a kaleidoscopic fracturing of his week' (*A*, p. 99). The exhaustion of material from the unconscious is very clear in a comparison of the defensive tone in the early novellas with the cool, uninvolved voice of the author in *Amsterdam*. McEwan recognised this shift as long ago as 1987, when he said: 'Perhaps it's that I have no more pimples to squeeze'.[64] Adam Mars-Jones comments: 'as the story moves towards an uncharacteristically contrived climax, it can seem that the author is simply dismissing the creatures he has conjured up, and tying up his story with a sardonically, even a derisively, neat bow'.[65]

McEwan's once passionate commitment to democracy now sounds a sour note. Freedom of the press, which once had been his cherished ideal and which provides the checks and balances in a free society, is depicted as gross abuse of power in the office politics of *The Judge*.[66] Sleaze and corruption poison public and private life and lead to disillusionment and cynicism. Depression is palpable in the loss of dependable solace, not only from intimate relationships but even from the landscape:

> the unimaginable age of the mountains and the fine mesh of living things that lay across them would remind him that he was part of this order and insignificant within it, and he would be set free. Today however...The open spaces that were meant to belittle his cares, were belittling everything: endeavour seemed pointless. Symphonies especially...Passionate striving. And for what? Money. Respect. Immortality. A way of denying the randomness that spawned us, and of holding off the fear of death. (*A*, p. 78)

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neurological disease. General Paresis of the Insane (G.P.I), tabes dorsalis and optic atrophy are the early signs of neuro-syphilis although endarteritis can damage any part of the body including the brain and nervous system. The disease generally commences between the ages of thirty and fifty. It starts with early dementia. Behaviour at work becomes disorganised and unpredictable. Tact and judgement deteriorate and the moral and ethical control of behaviour are undermined. Serious errors of judgement may occur before any noticeable intellectual deterioration, and apart from grandiose delusions, depression may be present; summary of information from chapter 10, W. Mayer-Gross, E. Slater, and M. Roth, *Clinical Psychiatry* (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1960) pp. 448 - 458.

[64] Walsh, 'Mr Nasty Turns into Mr Nice', p. 33.

[65] Adam Mars-Jones, 'Have a Heart', *The Observer Review* (6 Sept. 1998), p. 16.

[66] A national newspaper which seems to be modelled on *The Times*.

It is small wonder that McEwan has changed his mind about euthanasia. He told Michael O'Donnel that in his Utopia there would be no option for oblivion. He now seems less willing to countenance waiting passively for death amid degeneration and dementia. In spite of the subjects dealt with in *Amsterdam*, McEwan insists:

> Not many things in life get better as you get older. But in a writer's life, perhaps there's a little plateau that you hit somewhere in your mid-40s to your mid-50s. You've still got the physical stamina to write a novel without too much pressure, thoughts of mortality...[67]

Perhaps he has pushed the depression into the characters and the reader. McEwan's moral sense, so often defended by him in early interviews, is seen again here: 'It's about two old friends...It's the story of how they each make a disastrous moral judgement'.[68] By now, however, he has narrowed the issues down to 'conflicts...around selfishness and altruism'.[69] Robert Hanks points out that McEwan's Utopia bears: 'a striking resemblance to the [world] we already inhabit'.[70] Adam Mars-Jones points out that:

> As time passes, the traps McEwan lays for his creatures become less arbitrary...and more stringent, more philosophically loaded...In the two rudimentary moral mazes he constructs for these characters, the author seems to leave a clear thread, indicating the right course of action and all but garrottes them with it subsequently.[71]

From the point of view of this thesis, *Amsterdam* does not provide material for interpretation of the unconscious. It shows a mind freed from early conflicts and complexes, tackling the reality problems which come with worldly success and ageing. A curious reversal has come about. In the early days McEwan spoke about his style and the critics and readers thrilled and shuddered at the content - now he writes about the content, while the critics give prizes for his style. An assessment by a reader from Chicago states: 'A fine story about despicable people...it's amusing but shallow'.[72]

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[67] Dwight Garner, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Salon* (http://www.salonmagazine.com/books/int/1998/03/cov_si_3/nt.html).
[68] Ian McEwan, *Interview On-line: Author Chat Transcripts* (http://www.barnesandnobel.com/community/...5QVIOUNHO9&sourceid=000001313100216851).
[69] Robert Hanks, 'The Week on Radio: Dark Visions of Utopia' (Ian McEwan in Interview with Michael O'Donnel, BBC Radio 4, 14/3/97), *The Independent* (22 March 1997), p. 31.
[70] *Ibid.*
[71] Mars-Jones, 'Have a Heart', p. 16.
[72] Anon, *'Amsterdam': A Novel: Amazon.com* (http://www.extrapris.com/books/mcewan.htm).

Chapter 6 - *A Move Abroad*

> Choosing a new form in which to write bears some resemblance to travelling abroad; the sense of freedom is no less useful for being illusory or temporary...What you notice first is the absence of the old, familiar constraints, and you do things you would not do at home. (*MA*, p. XXI)

McEwan was thirty years old in 1978 when *The Cement Garden* was first published. He devoted the next few years to research and daydreams around a new novel. His preoccupation with evil existed in parallel with a lively interest in current affairs, a broad-minded liberalism and a serious, at times even grandiose, view of the role of the creative artist in society:

> Satire, mockery, reduction to absurdity, direct attack or simply the detailed, remorseless naming of what is there, these are the novel's weapons against political, or for that matter, military or religious systems which restrict or deny human possibility. (*MA*, p. XI)

The nuclear threat was never far from public awareness at this time and there was an increase of tension and mutual hostility between the great powers. McEwan's interest in international politics was aroused early:

> I was eight years old at the time of the [Suez] invasion and living in Libya where my father was an officer in the British Army...I understood for the first time that political events were real and affected people's lives. (*PL*, p. 27)

His sympathy with the women's movement and his socialist and democratic beliefs crystallised around his hatred of patriarchy in all its manifestations. Some of this had surfaced in the short stories through projective identification with oppressed individuals. The protagonist in 'Homemade': 'laughed...at this quiescent betrayal of a lifetime, heaving, digging, shoving,...sweating and groaning for the profits of others' (*FLLR*, p. 31). By his narrator's very contempt he stimulates the reader's socialist sympathies, whilst feminist sentiments cannot fail to be awakened by the spiteful anecdotes passed around the men and boys about the fat and promiscuous Lulu Smith who had: 'had it with a giraffe, a humming-bird, a man with an iron lung...a yak, Cassius Clay...a Mars Bar and the gear stick of her grandfather's Morris Minor' (*FLLR*, p. 29). Many reviewers misunderstood his early efforts and concentrated on the sensational and lurid material while the environment of a bed-sitting room in Clapham and life amid material poverty, together with his shyness and difficulty in explaining his work, strengthened the impression of oddness and perversity. In addition, whatever his ostensible moral purpose may have been in writing the stories, the reader may be aware that McEwan is availing himself of what Alan Franks called the 'perennial offer of exorcism'[1] and feel his need to relieve: 'the pressure of ideas

[1] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.

[which] means that...you can feel no contentment until you've got them down. It's self-exploration but ...it's always carried on at one removed or ten removed'.[2] His message is therefore heavily contaminated with a personal agenda which reveals truths about his unconscious that it is impossible to disown. Cosmo Landesman commented: 'It's odd that nice, middle-class, educated men should take such delight in being literary delinquents. Each one wants to be the baddest boy on the Booker block'.[3] McEwan felt that the short story did not give him enough scope to develop his ideas or articulate his message. He found great difficulty in crafting a novel which would give expression to his conscious preoccupations and act as a vehicle for his views: 'conflict[s] arise when the novelist has designs on his readers' opinions' (*MA*, p. X). This destroys his imaginative freedom since 'authorial intention tends to stand in the way of inspiration' (*MA*, p. XVI). He solved these problems by choosing a new form in which to write and called this change his 'move abroad'.

In 1978 he wrote *The Imitation Game*, which marked a change of style and content, as well as medium. This play was produced and directed by Richard Eyre, filmed on location in Essex and Suffolk in October and November 1979 and transmitted as a BBC *Play For Today* on the 24 April 1980. It was subsequently published as a script by Cape in 1981 along with the scripts of *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration* and *Solid Geometry* in a book entitled *The Imitation Game*. The book is dedicated to his parents, which is interesting in view of the fact that the parents in *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration* are the butts of very cruel humour and David Lee shares McEwan's father's Christian name. In *The Imitation Game* the parents are conventional, narrow-minded and pro-fascist. McEwan must have had great faith in his own parents' ability to separate the author from his creatures. He claims that he is close to his own parents, who have read all his books, but never complained of their subject matter: 'Maybe there's a slightly agonised silence...Pleased in the success but a feeling - a generational thing - that there are areas better left untouched'.[4] McEwan believes that: 'it's extremely important to clear your mind of any consideration of the adverse reaction of your family. The most important thing is to be true to your material'.[5] *The Imitation Game* is set in 1940. Although his own teen years were long past, he had spent the last seven years trying to come to grips with the remnants of childhood and adolescent traumas in his short stories and still had an abundance of loose ends to tie up. He also belonged to that group of young people who did not choose to settle early into conventional

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[2] Mathur, 'Nice Not Nasty', p. 44.
[3] Landesman, 'Sick and Tired of All That Gore', p. 19.
[4] Anon, 'Master of the Short, Sharp Shock', p. 32.
[5] Ian McEwan, *Interview On-line: Author Chat Transcripts* (http://www.barnesandnobel.com/community/ ...5QVIOUNHO9&sourceid 000001313100216851).

adult roles. He intended to write something about the Second World War, because 'although [he] was born three years after the war ended, it was a living presence throughout [his] childhood' (*IG*, p. 15). This may have been due to much reading of *Biggles* and *Gimlet*[6] as well as his father's career. His preoccupation with secrets, power and male domination now found a concrete time and place for their exposition. He believed himself to have been happy in his childhood, although he was often alone, but this changed in his adolescence:

> Adolescents naturally and urgently need to reach out for standards other than their parents' to judge themselves and the world by; the only adolescent reaches out and experiences more often than not a sense of guilt at his or her betrayal of a unique family relationship.[7]

This need to review and re-evaluate the ideas of his parents may have been behind McEwan's decision to research the time of their youth in *The Imitation Game* and again in *The Innocent* and through June and Bernard's youth in *Black Dogs*. In all three, the Second World War is either in progress or very recently ended and the ethos of patriotism and ruthless destruction of the enemy, which was then a mark of courage and loyalty, went hand in hand with the need to exclude women from active participation in the male concerns of fighting and government. At the same time there were the beginnings of female emancipation from proscriptive Victorian codes of sexual morality.

The Imitation Game allowed him the freedom to explore: 'The system whose laws, customs religion and culture consistently sanction the economic ascendancy of one sex over another' (*IG*, p. 14). The title is borrowed from an article in 1950 in *Mind* by Alan Turing, who was seconded from Cambridge to Bletchley Park during the war to work on Ultra, the project to decipher the German Enigma codes. This secret government project operated on 'the need to know'[8] basis and excluded junior workers, most of whom were women, from any intelligent participation in the programme. This is vividly illustrated by a war-time wireless broadcast which promised that: 'Henceforward...no skilled person is to do what can be done by an unskilled person, and no man is to do what can be done by a woman' (*IG*, p. 17). McEwan found it difficult to research Alan Turing's work because it was still classified.[9] He hit upon the idea of placing a woman at the centre of the plot so that he 'could disguise [his] own ignorance about Ultra as hers' (*IG*, p. 17). Cathy Raine is young, beautiful, intelligent, committed to the war effort and desperate to play her part, in spite of discouragement from all around

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[6] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] McEwan was informed of this principle by Peter Calvocoressi, Head of Air Ministry Intelligence, and used it again later in *The Innocent*.
[9] This material became available in 1999 and a television documentary on Channel Four entitled *Station X* confirmed some of McEwan's ideas, although at least one woman who took part in the programme was identified as a 'code-breaker' and seemed to have been a colleague of Turing.

her and genuine hardships involved in the performance of her duties. Her innocence of male politics and the mechanisms used to keep women as 'the housekeepers of war' (*IG*, p. 17) leads her to try to use her knowledge of German and her access to the coded messages, to try to break the Enigma herself.

Her relationship with Turner (an imaginary character based on Turing) quickly progresses to the bedroom scene in which Turner finds himself impotent and Cathy is caught red-handed with his confidential files. McEwan's intention to show the heroine moving 'from the outermost ring to the very centre, where she would be destroyed' (*IG*, p. 17) miscarries somewhat and the viewer is inclined to sympathise with the 'portly, avuncular' colonel (*IG*, p. 141) who calls her 'a very, very silly girl' (*IG*, p. 143) before he slams the door of her cell for the duration of the war. In his enthusiasm for openness and his belief that 'secrecy and power go hand in hand' (*IG*, p. 16), McEwan seems to have underestimated the genuine dangers of espionage during the war - a blind-spot which the reader notices again in *The Innocent*. It is generally acknowledged that the contribution of Ultra was one of the major factors in winning the War and the fact that the operation was kept secret by so many people for so long still astonishes experts. No doubt the men and women who were used to censored letters and exposed to the daily sight of posters warning 'Beware of Careless Talk' (especially those at Bletchley who had signed the Official Secrets Act) would not have seen the imprisonment of a woman caught snooping in files marked 'Top Secret' as a psycho-sexual matter. From his perspective of a post-war individual, the sexual politics involved in this, and other wars, are visible to McEwan and his highlighting of them serves as an example of 're-writing history', which *The Ploughman's Lunch* deals with at length:

> What is presented...in *The Imitation Game* is a self-conscious, almost self-declaring *illusion* of historical reality, in which certain contemporary preoccupations - with the new feminism, with the function of codes - are dressed up as the past...*The Imitation Game*...consistently reminds us that the relationship between then and now is a shifting one, and that the past cannot be fixed, can only be reinterpreted.[10]

McEwan's happy childhood in several faraway places and his misery at school in England may have given him a view of patriotism at variance with the traditional stance of 'my country right or wrong'. As Daniel Johnson points out, he was 'a late developer, awkward and as an expat, unsure of his social status in England'.[11] He may have paid for his freedom from traditional prejudices by a painful sense of rootlessness and unbelonging. Like Jeremy in *Black Dogs* he may have:

> discovered that the emotional void, the feeling of belonging nowhere and to no one that had

[10] Richard Johnstone, 'Television Drama and the People's War', *Modern Drama*, 28.2 (1985), p. 197.
[11] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.

> afflicted [him] between the ages of eight and thirty-seven had an important intellectual consequence: [He] had no attachments, [he] believed in nothing. (*BD*, p. 18)

This play represents McEwan's most obvious attempt to portray 'real' characters in 'real' situations, in support of his overtly stated attitudes and beliefs. The background here is carefully researched and based on conversations with women who were part of the Ultra project as well as on everything he could discover about Alan Turing and the project itself. The spirit of the play rings true and the message is reasonable. The intelligence and inventiveness of women were grossly underused during the Second World War and the belief that 'women could not keep secrets' (*IG*, p. 16) is patent nonsense. However, it seems probable that if a man had been 'caught...snooping in [a senior intelligence officer's] office' (*IG*, p. 141) or Turner had written in a report that he had 'used [his]...charms to wheedle information out of him' (*IG*, p. 142), he would have been treated with equal if not greater severity. McEwan makes it clear that Cathy had no ulterior motive in her involvement with Turner but amid the paranoia of war-time secret projects this innocence is culpable. When Turner fails sexually, he blames Cathy: 'You wanted to humiliate me and you succeeded. You hate your own job and you're jealous of me for mine. You wanted to even up the score...You vindictive little bitch' (*IG*, p. 139). Turner is right in his assessment of Cathy's feelings about her work and his anger may in part be due to some dim awareness of the fact that Cathy's attraction to him stems from his senior position in Ultra and the opportunity to approach the 'inner ring' containing the Enigma secrets, rather than anything personally or sexually compelling about him. However heroic Cathy's stance and sympathetic her portrayal in this play, there is no doubt that an Adlerian would see her attitude as an example of 'masculine protest' - not so much 'envy of the penis' as protest against lack of power and of recognition of her sterling qualities.[12] She understands that 'it's what being in the A.T.S. is all about. Simple repetitive jobs, backing up the men' (*IG*, p. 134). Here there are echoes of Caroline's mother who spent her life 'backing up the ambassador' (*CS*, p. 108).

The bedroom scene contrasts sharply with that in which Jack and Julie lose their virginity in *The Cement Garden*. Turner and Cathy are strangers. Spontaneous exploration of each other's worlds, as much as each other's bodies, is impeded by secrets (about Ultra and Turner's inexperience). Their stilted conversation only serves to emphasise the differences in their backgrounds, social class, education and status.

McEwan intended *The Imitation Game* as 'an allegory of a person against the system' (*NI*, p.

[12] Adler made the point that 'the will to power' expressed itself in competitive behaviour in both sexes and when women competed with men this had been erroneously understood as 'penis envy'.

174) and claimed that he had deliberately made the men into 'stereotypes' so that Cathy could be seen 'moving against a cardboard background of...stereotypical forms of male behaviour' (*NI*, p. 175). The play received much acclaim and McEwan, whose books had been banned by feminist book shops,[13] was now labelled as 'the male feminist' although he had no wish 'to be used as a spokesman for women's affairs' (*NI*, p. 176). He also felt that he had laid a 'false trail' in mentioning, both in the introduction and in the play itself, that Turner was a homosexual and this seems to be another example of McEwan's tendency to veer away after touching on this topic:

> What blurred the issue was that in an earlier scene a dispatch-rider tells Cathy that Bletchley is full of homosexuals, and there is also Turner's description of his dominating mother, so that some gays thought I was saying he couldn't make it and was vicious because he was homosexual. (*NI*, p. 177)

However, it rings true in spite of the disavowals. Cathy satisfies the wish to go back to a time when his mother was young and unmarried. Her 'crime' and glory are presented as her rebellion against the patriarchal system, but as Kiernan Ryan points out: 'While our high-minded ideals are appeased by indignation at the injustice visited upon innocence, what atavistic appetites are being fed by this televised scapegoating of a deviant individual?' (*Ryan*, p. 32).

All mothers are virgins in the fantasy of little boys and Cathy's loveless and unsuccessful efforts to discover the secrets of sex are paralleled by her spying to steal the men's secrets (Ultra), protected as they were by codes invented by the intellectual abstractions of mathematics. Here there are echoes of 'Solid Geometry' and of Peter Fortune's 'secret trunk', which Kate was not allowed 'to pry into' (*D*, p. 17). This ambivalence about women's sexuality is deeply repressed. In spite of conscious attempts to over-compensate for fear and distrust of women, in this play and in his feminist sympathies, McEwan harks back again and again to 'the crime' of consent. It seems that women hold powerful murderous[14] secrets and men's use of their intellect to exclude women may be seen as a reaction to this. Julie in *The Child in Time*, although she is innocent of any crime, is a sexually active mother and is punished by being locked away, alone, by her grief. Like Cathy, she has the solace of music but no opportunity for sex, except on the one occasion which, like Stephen's mother's defloration, results in an unwanted pregnancy. The idea of happy sexual intercourse between parents and marriage partners seems hard for McEwan to sustain and most of his couples either separate or spend much time apart. This may be rooted in experiences of his father's frequent absences and worse still, his frequent returns

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[13] Grant, *Contemporary Writers: Ian McEwan*, p.1.
[14] Stephen Lewis's mother and wife contemplate an abortion to dispose of unwanted pregnancies.

home. Even more deeply repressed is 'the fearful yet envious fascination of the male for the female' (*Ryan*, p. 9).

McEwan's feminist convictions may have concealed the belief that in a different political climate, his mother might have taken his own path to self-improvement through education and a career, without the need for economic dependence on a husband. Ann Barrington is such a mother. Stephen Lewis in *The Child in Time* wished that Charles and Thelma Darke had been his parents when Charles was a cabinet minister and Thelma a lecturer in physics. Jeremy chooses a diplomat in the Foreign Office, married to a teacher of piano and harpsichord; a couple of neo-Freudian psychoanalysts; an oceanographer, married to a columnist on the *Daily Telegraph*; and some married Oxford dons, before he finally settles for June and Bernard. These intellectual, cultured and high-minded 'adopted mothers' belong to McEwan's fantasy of losing his own parents and acquiring new ones from the professional upper-middle class: 'For a small child his parents are at first the only authority...as intellectual growth increases...he gets to know other parents' who are in some respects preferable and 'compares them with his own'.[15] Freud believes that:

> these works of fiction, which seem so full of hostility[16]...still preserve, under a slight disguise, the child's original affection for his parents. The faithlessness and ingratitude are only apparent..[in] the commonest of these imaginative romances, the replacement of both parents or of the father alone, by grander people...the child is not getting rid of his father but exalting him...the effort at replacing the real father by a superior one is only an expression of the child's longing for the happy, vanished days, when his father seemed to him the noblest and strongest of men and his mother the dearest and loveliest of women.[17]

In *The Child in Time* there is a moving child's memory of Stephen's parents, whom he wished to make: 'King and Queen of the entire world, and they could set right all the wrongs they described so wisely ...his father stronger than any ogre[18]...his mother...more beautiful than the queen of England' (*CT*, p. 71). The dramas are accessible to a much wider public than his stories and were not generally misunderstood. An introduction of nine pages, which he wrote in February 1980, appears in *The Imitation Game* for the first time. This, the twelve pages of introduction to the libretto written in 1982, the eighteen pages of preface to *A Move Abroad* written in 1989 and five pages of introduction to *The Ploughman's Lunch* written in 1985, as much as the dramas themselves demonstrate a change of direction in McEwan's work. Although written at different times over a period of a decade, these pieces

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[15] Freud, *On Sexuality*, p. 221.

[16] Examples of this can be seen in the unfavourable picture of Cathy's parents in *The Imitation Game*, Mr and Mrs Lee in *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration* and the contempt with which James Penfield treats his 'humble' parents in *The Ploughman's Lunch*.

[17] Freud, *On Sexuality*, p. 225.

[18] Jung stresses the importance in the man's inner life of the image of childhood 'when one's own father was unquestionably the handsomest and strongest man on earth', *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 235. Freud also wrote 'Even in later years, if the Emperor and Empress appear in dreams, those exalted personages stand for the dreamer's father and mother', *On Sexuality*, p. 225.

have a coherence and consistency which display a very different side of McEwan, which it was difficult to guess at from his early stories. Any one of these introductions could stand alone as articles on the art of fiction writing and on the questions and answers to urgent problems which confront mankind.[19] These essays are longer than some of his short stories. The reader has the illusion of meeting an intelligent, educated and thoughtful actor who has been playing the anti-hero in dramas written by someone else and who now speaks directly to his audience about the things that really matter.

The libretto for the oratorio, entitled *Or Shall We Die?*, is only seven pages long. It was commissioned from McEwan and Michael Berkeley by The London Symphony Orchestra with funds provided by the Arts Council of Great Britain. It was first performed at the Royal Festival Hall on the 6th February, 1983 by Heather Harper (Soprano), Stephen Roberts (Baritone), the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and conducted by Richard Hickox.

McEwan was delighted when Michael Berkeley asked him to write the libretto. His interest in music began in the sixth form.[20] It had been hinted at rather incongruously in 'Butterflies', when the protagonist recognises the tune played by the ice-cream man as 'a Mozart piano sonata' (*FLLR*, p. 62), and in 'Psychopolis' where the protagonist gives a performance of classical music on the flute. McEwan told Michael O'Donnel: 'I'm a very good listener to music - I play the flute terribly badly, I'd never ask anyone to listen to me play but on the other hand I do love music - my tastes are quite catholic'.[21] In *The Imitation Game* there is Cathy's and McEwan's own obsession with Mozart's 'Fantasia for piano K475'. Leonard, in *The Innocent*, learns to like Rock and Roll in Berlin. Julie, in *The Child in Time*, is a musician. Finally, Clive Linley, in *Amsterdam*, is a famous composer, whose obsession with the Millennium Symphony forms one of the important elements in this novella.

In the introduction, McEwan writes: 'the subject matter of this oratorio seemed more of an inevitability than a choice' (*OSWD*, p. 1). This is not surprising when it is remembered that projection of badness is typical of the paranoid-schizoid position, and that explosions and ruthless annihilation of opponents and preoccupation with power and winning at all costs are anal phase issues. Bigger and better instruments to ensure superior performance are characteristic of phallic competitions. There is no logical or reasonable justification for global destruction or the waging of a war which no-one can hope to survive, let alone win. As McEwan points out:

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[19] McEwan's essay on nuclear weapons, which appears as part of the preface to *A Move Abroad*, also appears in *Oxford Secondary English 4 - A GCSE Course* (OUP 1985) and was originally published as an article in *Granta*.
[20] Cowley, 'The Prince of Darkest Imaginings', p. 9.
[21] Michael O'Donnel, 'Utopia and Other Destinations', *Radio 4* (14 March 1997), transcript.

> between East and West there were no obvious territorial disputes...And the extent of the mutual dependence for new markets and new technology was so great as to undermine any pretence of a genuine ideological conflict. (*OSWD*, p. 4)

The Iron Curtain, the Cold War and the nuclear arms race can be understood as a large group expression of the Kleinian concept of the paranoid-schizoid position and the mechanism of splitting, with the projection of the unwanted aspects of the self into the enemy or stranger across the split. The fantasy of total destruction of this enemy seems to promise the eradication of evil in the world and the onset of a golden age where love, goodness and plenty can be expected to last forever. Kleinian mechanisms have been adapted to the study of small, face-to-face groups by Bion[22] who describes three basic assumptions underlying the attitudes of group members to the leader: dependency, fight or flight and pairing, which correspond roughly with the early infant phases and which tend to obstruct the attainment of the conscious aims of any working group. A similar adaptation of these ideas to the dynamics of large groups is offered by Fromm, in his efforts to explain the abdication of individual responsibility and the projection of power onto a leader, who is obeyed blindly as long as s/he expresses the group's irrational fantasies. As a result of this projection, a whole nation can be organised to commit genocide by scapegoating a minority within itself or to perpetrate total war against an unseen enemy who is believed to have all the stigmata of evil from which one's own side can be totally absolved. These efforts to explain small and large group dynamics in terms of early childhood fantasies are important for the study of McEwan's later work because he chooses the divided city of Berlin as a setting for *The Innocent* and the destruction of the Berlin Wall for *Black Dogs*. The political dimension of the symbolism of splitting and paranoid mistrust is central to both these novels but appears for the first time in the oratorio. Jung has written: 'It is the face of our own shadow that glowers at us across the Iron Curtain'.[23] The relationship of sado-masochism to power is complicated by the fact that power can exist in a positive as well as a negative sense. The power to achieve a goal independently is related to potency while the need to dominate others or submit to a power outside of oneself is 'the perversion of potency' just as sexual sado-masochism is 'the perversion of sexual love'[24] and is intimately connected with an attempt to meet infantile dependency needs. In the masochistic perversion, it is not the actual suffering or pain that is sought but the excitement and satisfaction of being overpowered and made to feel small and helpless, while in the sadistic perversion, the inflicting of pain is the ultimate proof of power over another person. Sexual excitement is experienced in these two situations which

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[22] W.R. Bion, *Experience in Groups* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1961).
[23] Jung, *Psychological Reflections*, p. 160.
[24] Fromm, *Fear of Freedom*, p. 140.

can be interchangeable. Erich Fromm explains the striving for both submission and domination as the need to escape from one's individual self into a fusion with somebody or something outside oneself to avoid unbearable aloneness. This solution to the problem of un-met dependency needs is not confined to the sexual sphere but is rather the sexual expression of a general orientation of the authoritarian personality to the world and other people. This is why the connection between the politics of the family and society is important as both provide opportunities for the expression of the negative power of domination-submission and are unlikely to yield to the well-intended superficial manipulation of either family dynamics or social values. It must have been some such opinion that McEwan tried to put to a group of militant social reformers:

> I recently attended a *Marxism Today* conference about eroticism and the left...The conference was a broad coalition of socialists and feminists, and I got on to incredibly dangerous ground when I suggested that many women probably have masochistic fantasies and that many men probably have sadistic fantasies, which are acted out in private but never spoken about in any kind of public debate. (*NI*, p. 178)

No one seems to have noticed that McEwan includes male masochists as well as female sadists in his fiction. The group regression of the conference into the paranoid-schizoid split and denigration of McEwan denotes signal anxiety and demonstrates how dangerous it can be to be right. This situation bears an uncanny resemblance to the behaviour of the delegates towards Hunter in 'Solid Geometry'.

For McEwan, it was a short step from the eruption of sadistic fantasies from his unconscious to the realisation of the danger of a nuclear holocaust. He recalls that at this time: 'Images of nuclear war invaded dreams' (*OSWD*, p. 5). The fact that these fears are realistic and shared by many people only shows that unresolved conflicts from the early developmental phases are common. They must be especially significant in the psychopathology of world leaders, who have a rare opportunity to be corrupted by the exercise of power and the support of the masses, swayed as they are by unrecognised forces from the universal unconscious. McEwan's anxieties focused on these real and appalling threats and he researched this topic in such depth and detail that he felt he 'could have taken a degree in it' (*MA*, p. XIX). His practised facility for dissociating frightening material in his daily life helped him to identify the dissociation in the attitude of ordinary people as the 'ability to compartmentalise, to keep dread in one room, hope or indifference in another' (*OSWD*, p. 5), which permitted the politicians to continue with the arms race in spite of private fears and occasional protests from the population. The oratorio gave McEwan a platform from which he could address these issues in a straightforward, readily understood form, supported by a direct appeal to feelings from the music. Given the

reasonableness of the justification for expressing, communicating and rousing acute anxiety, there is still the question: why this? and why then? In other places he readily admits to depression and anxiety which have a more personal cause. McEwan did not have children of his own until 1983. However, he believed that:

> Love of children generates a fierce ambition for the world to continue and be safe, and makes one painfully vulnerable to fantasies of loss. Like others, I experienced the jolt of panic that wakes you before dawn, the daydreams of the mad rush of people and cars out of the city before it is destroyed, of losing a child in the confusion. (*OSWD*, p. 5)

The description of anxiety states in *Clinical Psychiatry* fits well with McEwan's state of mind at the time of his move abroad:

> The mood is one of fearful anticipation, perhaps exacerbated at times to reach a panicky degree. There is a strong sense of tension...restlessness and incapacity for relaxation...Sleep is almost always disturbed...[and] may be felt as...unsatisfying, broken...in the early hours, commonly interrupted by dreams...[of] a frightening or nightmare quality...difficulty in concentration...lack of pleasure in favourite activities...[25]

McEwan writes:

> During 1980 and 1981 I was attempting to begin a new novel. I had no end of energy, inclination and time, and I had a number of pieces I knew belonged together. But I was discovering that my thoughts were not free...I was being distracted to such an extent that I set aside my few pages. (*MA*, p. XVIII)

He attributed this to the feelings evoked by the Cold War and was so 'distracted' that he could not write his novel, although later these pieces became *The Child in Time* and *The Innocent*. He married and managed to improve his material circumstances. By 1991, he was able to look back on those days: 'perhaps if I was 15 years younger and had more money than I did then, I'd be interested [in clothes]. But I got through my twenties in two pairs of jeans - which left my mind clear for other things'.[26] By the late 80s his anxiety and depression receded, although he himself said that in spite of some lightening of the political atmosphere, there were even more serious causes for concern in world affairs:

> the destruction of the rain forests, of plant and animal species, of the ozone layer, the now inevitable and possibly catastrophic rise in the earth's temperature, the pollution of rivers, lakes and oceans by chemical and radioactive waste... (*MA*, p. XXII)

There is never any shortage of issues to focus alarm and despondency in the daily news. McEwan wrote: 'My baggage was too heavy, and I was stuck...I left the luggage standing there, picked up my overnight bag and ran' (*MA*, p. XXI). This is an excellent metaphor for 'unfinished business' and the attempt to take a holiday 'abroad' to obtain temporary respite from troublesome symptoms.

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[25] W. Mayer-Gross, E. Slater, and M. Roth, *Clinical Psychiatry* (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 129.
[26] Etcetera, 'Who Reads Men's Magazines?', *The Independent on Sunday* (3 March 1991), p. 59.

His lost 'internalised child' had haunted his short stories and materialised later in *The Child in Time*. In the 70s he had opened the doors to long repressed material through the use of drugs and active imagination. Inevitably, this did not surface all at once in a recognisable fashion. Acute signal anxiety came to be experienced in a 'free-floating' state which attached itself to dream imagery and waking thoughts. The threat of total annihilation, presented by a nuclear war, is an apt image for the destruction of the inner world and rouses acute anxiety, foreboding and the premonition of doom. McEwan admitted to Ian Hamilton, 'I frightened myself with 'Butterflies".[27] Eventually, after he had structured a safe situation for himself in the 'here and now', he succeeded in containing these elements in his first two novels. In the meantime, in spite of his hostile stance towards religion, he availed himself of elements of Christian imagery, depicting the positive pole of the Mother archetype: 'To present at the beginning of this secular oratorio the idea of a mother and child may seem a deliberate and even too obvious an invocation of the form's religious tradition' (*OSWD*, p. 7). The image, which McEwan freely admits was 'powerfully shaped by archetypal forms' (*OSWD*, p. 7), was carried over to the image of the Nativity which forms the climax of *The Child in Time*. As Kiernan Ryan says: 'Everything that resists the forces of oblivion is fused into the image of a mother and her child, the epitome of what civilisation seeks to protect' (*Ryan*, p. 42).

McEwan decided to characterise the Newtonian world view as masculine and the Einsteinian universe as feminine. The masculine and feminine principles represent two opposing kinds of consciousness, corresponding to the right (feminine) and left (masculine) cerebral hemispheres. The woman sings of love for her daughter and anxiety about the nuclear threat. The man sings of technology, describing the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Here is the first explicit reference to his strong feelings against organised religion. The chorus sings: 'The aircrew kneels before the priest./ With God's blessing we deliver this bomb./...Our God is manly! In war he refuses us nothing!' (*OSWD*, p. 19). The man justifies the use of the bomb by the need for: 'the defence of order, freedom, property,/ sovereignty, the aspirations of the people', while the secrecy which surrounds these weapons is explained by the need to ensure that: 'the weak-hearted, the effeminate, the disloyal/ must know nothing' (*OSWD*, p. 20). Section five is made up almost entirely of the words of Mrs. Tomoyasu.[28] The chorus repeats a verse from William Blake. Finally the woman poses the question: 'shall there be womanly times, or shall we die?' As Adam Mars-Jones points out: 'It isn't clear whether

[27] Hamilton, 'Points of Departure', p. 20.
[28] Mrs Tomoyasu was a young woman in Hiroshima in 1945 whose nine year old daughter died in her arms. She told her story to Jonathan Dimbleby in his film *In Evidence: the Bomb*.

the phrase "womanly times" invokes power for women or a less rigid identity for men...of course the actual mechanism of change is unclear'.[29] Andrew Clements describes the oratorio as:

> the most heartfelt and genuinely affecting of his published prose...There nothing had to be feigned; the fear that he evoked was genuine, and the images in which it was couched and through which it was related to the writer's own life, were truthful, telling ones.[30]

The oratorio is dedicated to Polly and Alice (Penny Allen's daughters) and all children.

The Ploughman's Lunch, McEwan's first screenplay for cinema, was originally released in London (ironically on the eve of the 1983 general election). This was also directed by Richard Eyre and produced by Simon Relph and Anne Scott for Greenpoint Films Ltd in 1983. It was made on location in London, Brighton and Norfolk and went on general release in Great Britain and the U.S.A. It won McEwan *The Evening Standard* Award for 'Best Screenplay' in 1983. The film concerns itself with 'the dangers, to an individual as well as to a nation, of living without a sense of history' (*PL*, p. 26). It takes as its 'controlling metaphor for self-serving fabrications of the past' (*PL*, p. 26) the ploughman's lunch, which had been an invention of an advertising campaign mounted recently but passed off as an English tradition. This film had been meticulously researched. McEwan spent time in the BBC radio newsroom where 'an official version of events' (*PL*, p. 27) is manufactured daily to inform the population about current happenings. He watched television commercials being made and attended Labour and Conservative Party conferences.

Into these authentic settings he introduces his main character, James Penfield, a journalist and amateur historian, who is writing a book about the Suez crisis. McEwan was eight years old in 1956 and living in Libya where anti-British feeling among the inhabitants was so strong that he and other members of Army families: 'were herded into armed camps for protection...and for some weeks [he] lived in a tent with other children not so very far from a machine gun nest' (*PL*, p. 27). This vivid memory remains with McEwan as a reminder of the meaning of political events when translated into the daily lives of ordinary people. Like his pseudo-memories of the Second World War, which ended before he was born, these childhood memories and realisations may form the back-bone of his political philosophy, possibly because they are intimately connected with memories of his father: 'My father was a remote, organising figure with a service revolver strapped around his waist' (*PL*, p. 27). His father occupied a lower-middle rank in the Regular Army and must have been accustomed to taking orders from those above and giving orders to those below him. The family must have shared this ethos to

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[29] Mars-Jones, *Venus Envy*, p. 17.
[30] Andrew Clements, 'Mistrustful Influence of Evil', *The Financial Times* (27 June 1992), p. 17.

some extent, at least while they lived in military accommodation. In spite of the myth of his idyllic pre-boarding school childhood, McEwan insists that there would be no need for an Army to defend the frontiers of his Utopia: 'My father was in the Army for forty-nine years and I grew up on Army Camps...I think I've absorbed enough of the Army'.[31] It seems likely that his early left-wing views were formed as a reaction to this very rigid and tightly organised world. The authoritarian personality is common in the lower middle classes and forms the backbone of traditional authority in the family and the mainstay of hierarchical institutions and non-democratic political regimes. His later understanding of the crisis as a demonstration of the loss of British power and prestige and of Britain's subservient role to the U.S.A. is taken up again in *The Innocent* and could in some ways be related to his father's rank. His strong and authoritative father may have been seen and was certainly known to defer to possibly younger and less experienced junior officers prompting the realisation that behind the power in the boy's life there stood larger and stronger figures, too remote to be identified with and bitterly resented. The subsidiary issue of men's power over women may also have its roots in similar experiences involving his mother: 'Acute class-consciousness - he recalls the sand on Army beaches abroad being divided between children of officers and children of ranks - made him unhappy there'.[32] The young, brash American culture putting the disintegrating British Empire to shame in 1956 demonstrates Britain's political and military weakness.

James Penfield sets out to reinterpret the Suez crisis in the light of 'the steely pragmatism' of the 80s while he: 'unconsciously acted out in his private life a sequence of betrayals and deceits which would parallel the events he was distorting in his history' (*PL*, p. 28). Reinterpretation of the past in private life is a normal and helpful process whereby 'an official version of events' is created and remembered which justifies actions and pacifies the superego, while aspects of remembered reality which are at variance with it are repressed and therefore 'forgotten'. These operations help people to maintain self-esteem and reduce shame and guilt. McEwan made the point that 'rewriting history' also takes place in public life in an article for *The Financial Times*. He reports a conversation with a French academic in the 1980s who explains that 'history was a text to be deconstructed. It had no other reality'.[33] McEwan likened history to: 'reading an immensely long novel and though we are in the final pages, no one quite knows how it is going to end'.[34]

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[31] O'Donnel, 'Utopia and Other Destinations', transcript.
[32] Anon, 'Master of the Short, Sharp Shock', p. 32.
[33] Ian McEwan, 'Perspectives', *The Financial Times* (24 Dec. 1994), p. 3.
[34] *Ibid.*

James Penfield's background seems to resemble McEwan's own, which was described by William Leith as a 'curtain-twitching semi in the 1950's'.[35] Although he has never denied or neglected his parents and indeed insists that he comes from a lower middle-class background, McEwan has admitted to wishing his parents away so that, as an orphan, he could be accepted into a very different family (as happens to Jeremy in *Black Dogs*). He told John Haffenden:

> I've always been fascinated by the way in which people like James...can go a long way by being silent...partly because similar things happened to me when I was about 20 and first began to meet people who had intellectual parents...I used to find it absolutely terrifying...My parents were always very kind to people I took home, and they certainly weren't interested in gauging the megawatts of their intellects. (*NI*, p. 189)

Although McEwan's ambivalence about his background seems clear, at times he sincerely sides with his parents and in this play, uses James Penfield's heartless denial and neglect of his parents to arouse the viewers' hostility (as he did in support of the working-class father in 'Homemade'). It nevertheless gives James Penfield's character authenticity.

His sympathy for Anne Barrington, who accepts an affluent life-style in spite of her strong leftist political convictions, may be a defence of his own large house in Oxford and expensive tastes. He feels that her wealth and comfort did not prevent her from expressing:

> something very honourable about the educated English middle-class, which doesn't go to Tory Party conferences and bray for more punishment...She has a great deal of decency and compassion, but no position of strength. (*NI*, p. 188)

The scene in the poetry reading is like McEwan's description of his own public meetings to launch his books when the novelist becomes: 'practised at a certain kind of wind storm of words, a self-protecting blather...and the feeling of betraying the work itself is as palpable as a bad dose of flu' (*MA*, p. XVI). Daniel Johnson alludes to this when he mentions: 'the fat cheques from fashionable publishers and the endless self-advertising with which he, like all famous writers, is expected to repay them'.[36] James and Jeremy, in their inane giggling, can be seen to act out the author's feelings, while he himself is committed to a serious and respectful attitude to the questioners and their questions.

McEwan was working on the second draft of *The Ploughman's Lunch* as the fleet set sail for the Falkland Islands giving him an opportunity to include these events in the background and adding the dimension of immediacy to this rather dated story by suggesting comparisons between the two situations. The professionals involved in 'shaping our concepts of ourselves as citizens and as a nation...an editor, a journalist, a television researcher, a commercials director and a historian' (*PL*, p.

[35] Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', p. 9.
[36] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.

28) are intended to represent the people who are responsible for writing 'history':

> While there are clear differences between Suez and the Falklands crisis, I still think they have their roots in the same illusion: a Churchillian dimension, and also war as serving a certain rallying function for the right. It's another form of self-delusion. (*NI*, p. 187)

From the perspective of a decade, Mrs Thatcher made the same point:

> What we were fighting for eight thousand miles away in the South Atlantic was not only the territory and the people of the Falklands, important though they were. We were defending our honour as a Nation, and principles of fundamental importance to the whole world - above all, that aggressors should never succeed and that international law should prevail over the use of force...Since the Suez fiasco in 1956, British Foreign Policy had been one long retreat. The tacit assumption made by British and foreign Governments alike was that our world role was doomed steadily to diminish. We had come to be seen by both friends and enemies as a nation which lacked the will and capability to defend its interests in peace, let alone in war.[37]

It is paradoxical that the first British woman Prime Minister should have presided over the most 'virile times' (*MA*, p. XXIV) in recent history and this may have been behind McEwan's refusal to specify the premier's sex in *The Child in Time*. In Jung's theory the 'animus woman' corresponds well to the image projected by Mrs Thatcher and serves to show that the masculine spirit can animate people of both sexes. *The Ploughman's Lunch* was accepted as 'official cinema'.[38] Paul Giles notes that:

> Refusing the glossy fetishes of simplified nostalgia, magic realism introduces "history with holes, perforated history" (Jameson):[39] it insists on the structural disjunction between past and present that exists simultaneously with any attempt to reconstitute the lost objects of other eras. Many of the most effective Channel Four films of the 1980s did not simply fictionalize history; they also implicitly commented on how history itself becomes fictionalized. Thus magic realism's disjunction between event and memory, between the object and its name, expanded into a broader investigation of how national mythologies are created, how history is reinvented and rewritten, sometimes unscrupulously. Richard Eyre's Channel Four film *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983) remains the most obvious example of this, with its suggestion that the Suez crisis and the Falklands war were both repackaged for the history books like commodities in the advertising market.[40]

Leonard Quart comments:

> *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983), deals directly with Thatcherism...Penfield, an unpleasant and even repellent character, represents a fitting antiheroic figure for an ethos that eschews social concern and commitment in favour of the celebration of individual success.[41]

The last-minute addition of references to the Falklands crisis changed the film into a comment on contemporary politics, for reviewers. Tony Williams' arguments, in his provocative essay on Thatcher's politics concerning the implications of a movement of: 'national consciousness toward social

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[37] Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 173.
[38] Thomas Elsaesser, 'Images for Sale' in L. Friedman (ed.), *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started* (London: UCL Press, 1993), p. 64.
[39] Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 130.
[40] Paul Giles, 'History with Holes' in L. Friedman (ed.), *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started*, p. 84/5.
[41] Leonard Quart, 'The Religion of the Market' in L. Friedman (ed.), *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started*, p. 27.

Darwinist 'Victorian Values",[42] accurately reflect McEwan's own criticisms of the 80s. As Mary Desjardins says:

> in the Thatcher years, competition among free enterprisers replaced a maternal state seen as infantilizing and therefore incapacitating its citizens. The government's contribution in constructing a contemporary popular memory that reinstates an earlier, powerful national identity based on 'pluck' (self-initiative) and imperial values is [presented as] crucial to the successful 'maturation' of British citizens.[43]

Not all reviews were positive. Daniel Johnson describes it as a:

> polemical (and ephemeral) piece...an amusing but hopelessly dated film about the Falklands conflict which he [McEwan] now describes as a product of 'the liberal mind's shock' at the revelation of Margaret Thatcher's true significance.[44]

No longer Ian Macabre, the author is now accepted as a thoughtful if iconoclastic critic of Thatcherism. However, his preoccupations have not changed and he continues to create anti-heroes who betray each other and ultimately themselves. Personal memories continue to vitalise his work but now they are presented in a reworked form and appropriate context which is readily understood and shared by the critics. Empathy is difficult with the characters in *The Ploughman's Lunch* which Andrew Billen describes as 'unconstructive satire' where 'the titular metaphor undercut itself by being equally applicable to McEwan's film, a prewrapped satire on Thatcherism as facile as the philosophy it opposed'.[45] It is as unflattering to the political right as to the left. The Conservatives are presented as blood-thirsty and dishonest, the Greenham Common women as naive and idealistic, the intellectuals as self-serving, the news reporters as biased and the artist as hypocritical.[46] McEwan defends the melancholy of the plays by saying that: 'Pessimism is just one of morality's techniques' (*MA*, p. XVI).

McEwan's drama is much less conspicuously successful than his books. Several of his stories have been filmed, after he won fame as a writer.[47] His screenplay *Soursweet* (1988) is a loyal adaptation of Timothy Mo's 1982 novel (shortlisted for the Booker Prize). He began writing *The Good Son* in 1984, shortly after finishing *The Child in Time*. After five years of close involvement with this project, he was replaced (without his knowledge) by another scriptwriter. He believes the venture was sabotaged by Macauly Culkin's father and no longer wishes to be associated with it. The film was reviewed by Jack Kroll who comments that 'clearly, uncredited rewriting has gutted it of McEwan's

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[42] Tony Williams, '*The Ploughman's Lunch*: Remembering or Forgetting History', *Jump Cut*, 36 (1991), p. 13.
[43] Mary Desjardins, 'Free From the Apron Strings: Representations of Mothers in the Maternal British State' in L. Friedman (ed.), *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started*, p. 131.
[44] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.
[45] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.
[46] A similar caricature of 'the great and the good' is drawn in *Amsterdam*.
[47] The film version of *The Comfort of Strangers*, directed by Paul Schrader from a screenplay by Harold Pinter, was released in 1991; *The Cement Garden*, adapted for the screen and directed by Andrew Birkin, was released in 1992. *The Innocent* was released in 1995 with a screenplay by McEwan and directed by John Schlesinger.

usual texture'.[48] It was this experience that prompted McEwan to make his much quoted comment that writing for Hollywood is 'an opportunity to fly first class, be treated like a celebrity, sit around the pool and be betrayed'.[49] McEwan's bitterness is understandable when he says: 'it's what you should expect when people are spending the G.N.P. of small countries to make other people less bored for 100 minutes'.[50] It is possible to have the best of both worlds by reaching sufficient eminence as a writer to ensure that the stories are made into films, although there is always a danger of disappointment with the film version. McEwan's later novels, particularly *Enduring Love* and *Amsterdam*, show a clear emphasis on visual imagery, action sequences and dialogue, which seem to invite adaptation for the screen. McEwan defends this change in his writing:

> Film is not an influence. I've always liked my writing to have a visual quality. I like to think my reader can see what I can see...Our language is saturated in visual metaphor. Literature was a visual metaphor long before film![51]

After finishing *The Ploughman's Lunch*, McEwan returned to the claustrophobic world of intimate relationships in a search for the deeper roots of evil and particularly of sado-masochism, in *The Comfort of Strangers*. His attempt to depersonalise the issues in the libretto succeeded in so far as he used images from the archetypal unconscious to join his voice to that of millions of other people across the globe. In *The Imitation Game* and *The Ploughman's Lunch* he created believable if superficial characters in carefully researched, realistic situations. McEwan's real medium is language. Much of the pleasure for the reader comes from his style and sophistication in the use of words, while his plots are often far-fetched and his characters resemble one another to the extent that they resemble McEwan himself or Penny Allen. His thoughts are interesting and lucidly expressed. These qualities make for better books than films. His decision to reveal his beliefs, together with the improvement in his material circumstances, add up to an image very different from 'a sort of trembling ghoul, who's just stepped away from some unspeakable act'.[52] However, the image is so compelling that it continues to be recalled, if only to remark on the change or celebrate its absence.

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[48] Jack Kroll, 'The Bad Seed, Part Deux', *Newsweek* (11 Oct. 1993), p. 59.
[49] Sabine Durrant, 'I Thought Nothing Could Go Wrong. Huh', *The Independent* (19 Aug. 1993), p. 11.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Anon, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: BoldType* (http://www.bookwire.com/boldtype/imcewan/read.article).
[52] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 16.

Chapter 7 - *The Child in Time*

> The mystic's experience of timelessness, the chaotic unfolding of time in dreams, the Christian moment of fulfilment and redemption, the annihilated time of deep sleep, the elaborate time schemes of novelists, poets, daydreamers, the infinite, unchanging time of childhood....The slow time of panic. (*CT*, p. 120)

The Child in Time is McEwan's first full length novel. It won the Whitbread 'Novel of the Year' Award for 1987 and in 1989 it 'was a featured title in a festival of Green books on the basis that it called for a more nurturing relationship with the environment'.[1] McEwan took the title from Tippett's oratorio *A Child of Our Time*. He began it in 1983, shortly after the first performance of his own oratorio and two months after the release of *The Ploughman's Lunch*: 'Taken together, these two pieces were the groundwork for the novel' (*MA*, p. VII). He finished it in December 1986 and it was published in 1987.

In *The Child in Time* McEwan tries, for the first time, to keep a balance between the conscious and the unconscious elements of his fantasy. He uses material from 'the here and now', carefully integrated with his memories and daydreams, and includes a bizarre accident and vivid descriptions of a paranormal experience. The novel is set in London and the English countryside, both described in realistic detail. The date (worked out by Adam Mars-Jones from the dates of the Olympic Games, the prevailing climatic conditions etc.) is 1996. This places it around a decade into the future from the time of writing. His vision of the future has armed policemen and licensed beggars, while evidence of global warming recurs like a morbid refrain throughout the story. The Prime Minister is on permanent Nuclear Alert and never out of reach of a telephone hot line.

His conscious preoccupations with politics, science, feminism and the urgent need for change, had been expressed in his dramas. Critics were amazed at the change in his writing: 'The publication of this complex, touching novel marked a turning point in McEwan's career'.[2] Peter Kemp remarks that with *The Child in Time* McEwan's 'imagination grew up'.[3] McEwan was not impressed with suggestions that he had grown up and abandoned the gothic and the macabre. He assured Daniel Johnson that the novel does not represent 'any great shift away from shocks to the system'.[4] D. J. Taylor describes it as 'McEwan's most obviously political book...a conscious projection of the straight leftist view of third-term Thatcherism'.[5] McEwan summarises the political background as:

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[1] Mars-Jones, *Venus Envy*, p 32.
[2] Bookmark, '*The Child in Time*', *The Times* (3 Feb. 1996), p. 49.
[3] Kemp, 'Hounding the Innocent', p. 11.
[4] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.
[5] Taylor, 'Ian McEwan: Standing Up for the Sisters', p. 58.

> Money-obsessed, aggressively competitive and individualistic, contemptuous of the weak, vindictive towards the poor, favouring the old American opposition of private affluence and public squalor, and individual gain against communal solutions, indifferent to the environment, deeply philistine, enamoured of policemen, soldiers and weapons - virile times indeed. (*MA*, p. XXIV)

It is this attitude that prompted John Carey to comment: 'His detractors represent him as mean and cruel in his imaginings and a rich, whingeing anti-Thatcherite to boot'.[6] McEwan draws the picture of a two nations state with a light touch:

> The people who used the supermarket divided into two groups, as distinct as tribes or nations. The first lived locally in modernised Victorian terraced houses which they owned. The second lived locally in tower blocks and council estates. Those in the first group tended to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, brown bread, coffee beans...wine and spirits, while those in the second group bought tinned or frozen vegetables, baked beans, instant soup, white sugar...beer, spirits and cigarettes...In the second group were pensioners buying meat for their cats, biscuits for themselves. (*CT*, p. 15)

Thelma's conversations with Stephen give McEwan the opportunity to inform the reader of recent advances in physics and to offer some thoughts on the nature of time and the 'higher order of theory' (*CT*, p. 118). The opposition of authoritarian and liberal methods of child care[7] are carried to extremes in order to polarise the argument. 'The Authorised Childcare Handbook HMSO' argues for strict control and forced adjustment of the child to rigid adult expectations:

> the hard-pressed parent may find some solace in the time-honoured analogy between childhood and disease - a physically and mentally incapacitating condition, distorting emotions, perceptions and reason, from which growing up is the slow and difficult recovery. (*CT*, p. 179)

This is as ridiculous as the argument put forward by Professor Brody from the Institute of Child Development, who asserts that children should not be taught to read until the age of seven because the brain is not ready for this 'degree of abstraction' (*CT*, p. 76). The image of the lost child is so compelling that many critics concentrate on the loss of Kate in the supermarket and speak of: 'the ghastly register of unexplained, unsolved disappearances, where bereft parents are left inconsolable, denied the relief of rage or grief'.[8] Blake Morrison uses her review of the novel as a platform to air views about child-snatching and the inadequacies of child care.[9]

The polemic between male and female consciousness appears here in the characters of Charles and Thelma Darke. The argument seems unfairly biased against the masculine side, because Charles is presented as severely neurotic, while Thelma is mature, wise, strong and positive in her attitude to life

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[6] John Carey, 'Tunnel of Love', *The Sunday Times* (13 May 1990), p. 1.
[7] McEwan refers to C. Hardyment, *Dream Babies: Three Centuries of Good Advice on Child Care* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983).
[8] The Vulture, 'The Vulture Picks Over the Bones of Contemporary Culture', *The Times* (3 Feb. 1996), p. 18.
[9] Blake Morrison, 'Suffer the Little Children and So Diminish Their Suffering: Is the World Less Safe or Are Parents More Anxious?', *The Independent on Sunday* (19 Aug. 1990), p. 18.

and its problems. McEwan complained of being squeezed into the mould of 'feminist writer' as far back as 1983 and this label was confirmed by *The Child in Time*. D. J. Taylor remarks that: 'In some ways he is the first male English writer to hook himself on to the feminist lobby'.[10] Ryan says this book: 'is telling a new kind of story about a new kind of experience, the liberation of men from masculinity' (*Ryan*, p. 51). Women writers reacted with embarrassment and amusement. Sheila MacLeod comments that: 'McEwan writes as an outsider looking in on a feminine world with a touching awe and respect which, in [her] rather embarrassed opinion, is not altogether merited'.[11]

Charles Darke is a startling example of gross regression. His astonishing success in business and enterprise, and his ambitious striving for political power, are not matched by any strong moral convictions.[12] Unable to maintain his false persona over time he resigns from the cabinet and retreats into the country with his wife, where he pretends to be a ten-year-old boy on holiday. Jung's view of regression is of interest here:

> If we try to extract the common and essential factors from the almost inexhaustible variety of individual problems found in the period of youth, we [find that]...Something in us wishes to remain a child; to...indulge our own craving for pleasure or power. (*MM*, p. 116)

Thelma believes that Charles's problems are related to the death of his mother when he was twelve or to his father's tyrannical behaviour so that 'he was denied a childhood' (*CT*, p. 202).[13] She explains his suicide by the idea that: 'He wanted to hurt me by hurting himself. He went out into the woods and sat down. He put himself out in the cold. As suicides go it was petulant and childish' (*CT*, p. 203).[14] In this context, it is interesting to recall that in his radio broadcast with Michael O'Donnel, McEwan insisted that in his Utopia suicide would continue to be an option: 'I think that the only way out would be suicide and suicide is a terrible violence to the living...and has to be therefore something that people only do in extremes'.[15] It is possible to understand Charles' fatal withdrawal from the world as rage and despair vis a vis his wife who carried the mother transference. Because he knew his mother could not help dying, his anger was mixed with guilt and evoked a need for punishment. Charles' sexual deviation is a part of his regressive defence:

> It wasn't an eccentric whim. It was an overwhelming fantasy which dominated all his private moments...he wanted it in the way some people want sex. In fact, it had a sexual side.

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[10] Taylor, 'Ian McEwan: Standing Up for the Sisters', p. 57.
[11] MacLeod, 'A Child of Our Time', p. 13.
[12] K. Abraham (1911) deals with loss in childhood which can contribute to this episodic psychosis in 'Notes on the Psychoanalytical Investigation and Treatment of Manic Depressive Insanity', *Selected Papers on Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949).
[13] K. S. Adam (1973) discusses the effects of the loss of a parent in 'Childhood Parental Loss, Suicidal Ideation and Suicidal Behaviour', *The Child in His Family: the Impact of Disease and Death* (New York and London: John Wiley, 1973).
[14] D. Shepherd and B. M. Barraclough consider the effects of suicide in 'The Aftermath of Suicide', *British Medical Journal*, vol. 1 (1974), 600-3.
[15] O'Donnel, 'Utopia and Other Destinations', transcript.

> He wore his short trousers and had his bottom smacked by a prostitute pretending to be a governess...It's a pretty standard minority taste among public school boys. (*CT*, p. 200)

Thelma may have unwittingly aggravated Charles' problem by 'acting into the mother transference', unaware that her high status and her kindness may have contributed to Charles' sexual estrangement from her. He fits into the category of men about whom Freud said: 'where they love, they do not desire and where they desire, they cannot love'.[16] He wrote at length about the 'split libido', which is a defence against incestuous wishes for the Oedipal mother:

> this split in their love consists in a psychical debasement of the sexual object, the over-valuation...being reserved for the incestuous object and its representatives...fulfilment ...seems possible only with a debased and despised sexual object.[17]

Charles lives with his wife, flirts with the Prime Minister and visits prostitutes.

Stephen struggles with the temptation to regress and this may be the reason why he is so intolerant of it in others. In spite of his grief and despair, he does not contemplate suicide but lapses into apathy, escaping into alcoholism for three years, during which he: 'tilted his bottle and sucked' (*CT*, p. 125):

> Solitude had encouraged in him small superstitions, a tendency to magical thought. The superstitions had attached themselves to daily rituals, and in the constant silence of his own company his adherence had become rigorous. (*CT*, p. 126)

McEwan freely admits to superstitious behaviour:

> I am very superstitious. Black ink always. Notebooks have to be from some obscure firm in Edinburgh, just simply because the first one was from there and I want them all to look like that. I have to continue with the kind of paper I started on...[18]

Magical thinking and obsessional rituals are typical of latency period childhood and can be returned to when anxiety levels are high and reality offers inadequate reassurance. Unwilling to face up to his own regression he projects contempt onto people on television game and chat shows: 'these infants who longed for nothing more than to be told when to laugh...he wanted them punished, soundly beaten, no tortured. How dare they be children!' (*CT*, p. 125). McEwan has taken the idea of escape from life into a carefree childhood to its logical conclusion and inevitable outcome with Charles and this theme disappears from his future fiction: 'when [Stephen] carries [the] dead body home from the woods on his back, the scene serves as an image of McEwan himself bearing off the corpse of a cherished daydream he has long outgrown' (*Ryan*, p. 51).

In Stephen, McEwan creates a hero who has made his peace with his parents, has established

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[16] Freud, *On Sexuality*, p. 251.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 252.
[18] Danziger, 'In Search of Two Characters', p. 13.

an intimate relationship with a marriage partner and who makes a sincere effort to confront the problems which have haunted him since his childhood - three factors important in achieving emotional maturity. Paul Mathur describes this novel as: 'his most nakedly personal work'.[19] Stephen Lewis shares with the author his 'only child' status, his kindly lower middle-class parents and a 'childhood [which] had been pleasantly dull, despite its exotic locations' (*CT*, p. 34). The description of Stephen's early life is a very thinly disguised version of his own. He captures the atmosphere of an ordinary English home in a remote, alien climate to perfection:

> the smell and feel of his own skin in this heat had brought back to him the taste of an only childhood in hot countries - the perspiration, and the pervasive, sweet scent of mangoes... English vegetables boiling in the kitchen...the tiger under the palm tree, emblem of his school and of his father's beer. (*CT*, p. 69)

Interesting too is Stephen's memory of his father's accusation that he was 'a mother's boy' and Stephen's insistence that he 'was also a father's boy' (*CT*, p. 72). Like Robert, in *The Comfort of Strangers*, Stephen slept with his mother, when his father was away, and remembered tenderly that 'she was always there when he awoke in the dark' (*CT*, p. 71). McEwan told Daniel Johnson that his childhood had 'a kind of glow'[20] so it seems likely that Stephen's 'North Africa...idyll' closely resembled his own: 'His time was divided between school, which ended at lunch, and the beach where he met his friends, who were all sons of his father's colleagues...It was a secure and ordered world, hierarchical and caring' (*CT*, p. 73).[21] Stephen shares McEwan's traumatic adolescence: 'At boarding school in England, the blank and taciturn boy went largely unremarked..."It was like a long sleep. I was very mediocre in class usually twentieth out of thirty.'"[22] The meetings of the committee, which Stephen attends, are 'familiar from his schooldays, from the hundreds or thousands of classroom hours dedicated to mental wandering' (*CT*, p. 12). During the three years of separation from Julie, Stephen changes some of the adolescent attitudes, left over from McEwan's 'drop-out' days:

> For years he had convinced himself he belonged at heart with the rootless, that having money was a merry accident, that he could be back on the road any day with all his stuff in one bag. But time had fixed him in his place. (*CT*, p. 102)

He re-evaluates the personalities of his elderly retired parents so that his attitude to them is in sharp contrast to James Penfield's in *The Ploughman's Lunch*:

> Indoors and out, there was an orderly concern for objects, their cleanliness and disposition, which he no longer took to be the exact antithesis of all that was human, creative, fertile -

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[19] Mathur, 'Nice Not Nasty', p. 43.
[20] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.
[21] Stephen's experiences during the Suez crisis are exactly the same as McEwan's own.
[22] Anon, 'Master of the Short, Sharp Shock', p. 32.

keywords in his furious teenage notebooks. (*CT*, p. 86)

Overall, there is a feeling that this 'King and Queen' have been sympathetically reduced to ordinary human size. Even the Prime Minister is appreciated as 'the nation's parent...a repository of collective fantasy' (*CT*, p. 83). McEwan's parents' courtship may have been described to him by his mother. The young couple's war time romance and the bicycle rides in the country when the soldier was home on leave seem authentic, especially as they are repeated for June and Bernard in *Black Dogs* in almost every detail. The proposed abortion need not have any basis in fact but may represent an important psychological reality. Stephen's success as a writer of children's stories echoes Professor Bradbury's comment: 'Ian was superb at calling up the feelings of the child. He wrote with enormous imaginative force. His world was that of adolescence, fantasy, childhood'.[23] This is the strength of Stephen's book *Lemonade*. His adult status is emphasised by the description of his close, intimate and politically correct relationship with his wife, movingly described in the early part of the novel: 'They had been married six years, a time of slow, fine adjustments to the jostling principles of physical pleasure, domestic duty and the necessity of solitude' (*CT*, p. 14). Two novels later, the same portrayal of comfortable and harmonious familiarity will be described between Jeremy and Jenny, in *Black Dogs*, and later still between Joe Rose and Clarissa, in *Enduring Love*. This may well be the ideal, if not the attained blue print, for a happy marriage in McEwan's opinion. They all have in common a man making a sincere effort to realise that 'evolutionary transformation of consciousness' (*OSWD*, p. 16) so keenly recommended in the oratorio.

Descriptions of grief had been conspicuous by their absence in McEwan's earlier work. Many protagonists had experienced loss and bereavement but had used powerful mental mechanisms to defend themselves against the process of mourning.[24] *The Comfort of Strangers* ends with Mary's 'briefest intimation of the grief that lay in wait' (*CS*, p. 125). Mrs Tomoyaso's tragedy is stylised, remote in time and place and serves to arouse anxiety rather than describe grief. In this novel mourning is dealt with in great detail. Here, as elsewhere (notably earlier in 'Conversations with a Cupboard Man' and more recently in *Enduring Love*), McEwan seems to be making use of the published information on his topics and presents an accurate description of this process. An extensive world literature followed Freud's original paper 'Mourning and Melancholia'[25] and John Bowlby reviewed

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[23] *Ibid.*

[24] H. Deutsch deals with prolonged absence of conscious grieving which produced severe personality difficulties and episodic depressions, traced in psychoanalysis to a loss experienced during childhood but never mourned, in 'Absence of Grief', *Psychoanalysis Quarterly*, no. 6 (1937), 12-22.

[25] S. Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia (1917)' in *The Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud, Standard Edition*, vol. 14 (London and New York: Hogarth Press Ltd., 1962), 243-58.

much of this research in volume 3 of his monumental work on emotional bonding.[26] In delineating the four stages of grief in adults,[27] Bowlby leaned heavily on the investigations of C. M. Parkes,[28] I. O. Glick, R. S. Weiss,[29] P. J. Clayton[30] and F. Brown.[31] It seems probable that McEwan had read *Attachment and Loss* and possibly some of the papers enumerated in the bibliography. He used some of his personal memories, which he attributed to Stephen, to illustrate this process. The sequence of the stages is correct. The experiences, actions and feelings strike an authentic personal note. Psychiatric authorities agree that loss need not involve death. Prolonged and unwilled separation from attachment figures and a familiar environment can produce the same effect. Loss in childhood or adolescence, especially if not followed by grieving to the stage of resolution with reattachment to people who act as a 'security base', can produce a life-long vulnerability to depression and creates a tendency to over-react to future losses and stresses involving change, in severe and sometimes pathological ways.[32]

Being sent to boarding school can be more traumatic than bereavement, because in this situation the parents survive and give signs of their continued existence, at a distance, with letters and visits, but are not available to give emotional support or provide a sense of security from day to day. In addition, the total environment is lost at the same time. The new situation is strange and lacks reference points so that disorientation is severe and can be prolonged by emotional withdrawal and consequent inhibition of exploratory behaviour and initiative. It is significant that the word 'bereave' means 'to rob' and Kate, in the story, has been 'stolen'. She has not died. McEwan, like Charles, may have felt that he had been robbed of his childhood and the security of his mother's love.

Loss is immediately followed by a stage of shock and numbness which usually lasts between a few hours and a week or more. Bereaved people tend to cling to those nearest them for support in an effort to deny the loss: 'Stephen and Julie had clung to one another, sharing dazed rhetorical questions, awake...all night' (*CT*, p. 23). This is followed by the second stage, lasting some weeks and sometimes months, of total preoccupation with the lost person. Intense yearning, is usually punctuated by sudden bouts of weeping, referred to as pangs of grief which are frequent at first and recede gradually with time: 'All I want to do is to want you to come back. It became an incantation, whose rhythm narrowed

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[26] Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*.
[27] The stages of grief are shock, protest, despair and detachment or resolution.
[28] C. M. Parkes 'Separation Anxiety: an Aspect of the Search for a Lost Object' in M.H. Lader (ed.), *Studies of Anxiety: British Journal of Psychiatry Special Publication*, no. 3 (London: World Psychiatric Association and Royal Medico-Psychological Association, 1969).
[29] I.O. Glick, R.S. Weiss, C.M Parkes, *The First Year Of Bereavement* (New York: John Wiley, Interscience, 1974).
[30] P.J. Clayton, 'The Effects of Living Alone on Bereavement Symptoms', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, no. 132 (1975), 133 - 7.
[31] F. Brown, 'Depression and Childhood Bereavement', *Journal of Mental Science*, no. 107 (1961), 754 - 77.
[32] P. Marris, *Loss and Change* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), and J.B.M. Miller, 'Children's Reactions to the Death of a Parent: A Review of Psychoanalytical Literature', *Journal of American Psychoanalytical Association*, vol. 19 (1971), 697 - 719.

to a throb, a physical pain, until all that went before was held in the words, It hurts' (*CT*, p. 130). There is insomnia and a restless activity focused on searching, or an urge to search in spite of attendance at a cremation or funeral: 'He had become detached in an energetic, calculating way. If she was to be found, then they would find her because he was prepared to do nothing else but search' (*CT*, p. 19). Irrational outbursts of rage against the lost person and others who are blamed for the loss, including oneself, are frequent and can alienate friends and family who are trying to help.

The third stage, which can last for months or years, involves disorientation and despair, sometimes punctuated by the illusion of the lost one's return or the mistaking of a stranger in a public place for them. Stephen's apathetic withdrawal into painful solitude and poignant sadness are typical of this stage. Authentic too is the experience of mistaking a strange girl in the playground for Kate: 'The thick fringe bobbed against her white forehead, her chin was raised, she had a dreamy appearance. He was looking at his daughter' (*CT*, p. 142). This may be based on a real experience because it had appeared earlier in *The Cement Garden*:

> The woman was my mother and she was looking right at me. I stopped...Great relief and recognition swept through me and I laughed out loud. It was not Mother of course, it was Julie, wearing a coat I had never seen before...Face to face with her now I saw that it was not Julie either. (*CG*, p. 69)

Finally, in the fourth stage, there is a move to reorganise the daily routines in a way which no longer includes the lost person. Substitute relationships are made and healing, but not forgetting, can take place. Stephen takes up tennis and classical Arabic with individual tutors to structure his time. There is a tendency for grief to return at times of special significance, like birthdays, Christmas and anniversaries.[33] Three years after her disappearance, Stephen visits a toy shop to buy Kate presents for her sixth birthday.

Bowlby reports that in the studies drawn upon, marital problems, divorces and separations are common and it is not unusual for parents to decide to replace the lost child by having another:

> There are reasons for doubting the wisdom of these very early replacements, since there is danger that mourning for the lost child may not be completed and that the new baby is seen not only as the replacement he is but as a return of the one who has died...[Time is needed] to enable [parents] to reorganise their image of the lost child and so retain it as a living memory distinct from that of any new child they may have.[34]

In the last paragraphs of the novel, Stephen and Julie seem to have achieved this, at the last possible moment: 'It was then, three years late, that they began to cry together at last for the lost, irreplaceable

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[33] This is discussed by G. Pollock in 'On Mourning and Anniversaries: The Relationship of Culturally Constituted Defence Systems to Intra-Psychic Adaptive Processes', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 42 (1961), 341 - 61.
[34] Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, vol. 3, p. 122.

child who would not grow older for them' (*CT*, p. 214).[35]

By 1983, McEwan seemed ready to confront the roots of his personal unhappiness. He told Daniel Johnson that 'he had "found himself" only in his mid-thirties, through Penny...and the children, his two stepdaughters as well as his two young sons'.[36] Much of *The Child in Time* had been on his mind even before *A Move Abroad*. He delivered his second son himself. The imagined experience may have had little in common with later reality: 'For minutes they were beyond forming sentences and could only make noises of triumph and wonder, and say each other's names aloud' (*CT*, p. 220). The anticipated sacredness of the experience only needs a halo around the three heads to represent the Nativity. Predictably it moves some critics with admiration and others with distaste. Boyd Tonkin feels: 'In this finale the novel's earnest sweetness nearly turns to saccharine...McEwan dances on the tightrope of his style over a vat of schmaltz'.[37] Anthony Quinn complains: 'only when he celebrated the joys of marital intimacy in the closing scenes...did his step falter. It was love all right, but the moon calf intensity felt like a fall from grace'.[38] There is no hint of blood, pain or the terror of giving birth in an isolated country cottage without a midwife, analgesia, resuscitation equipment or a telephone to summon help in an emergency. Small wonder that Penny Allen, previously living out the role of the loyal wife and fulfilled mother, should, when freed from this constraint, have written:

> Our contemporary tendency to expect a woman in childbirth to have as her companion not a mother, sister or wisewoman, but her husband frequently leaves both partners vulnerable and anxious and the childbirth itself the source of disappointment, blame and resentment.[39]

The disappointment may also account for the absence of children from McEwan's next novel, *The Innocent*, and the peripheral role of those that are included in the next two books, *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*. He has never lost a real child. He had imagined a situation which dramatised his unresolved grief and chronic sadness by a concrete scenario of an irrevocable and tragic personal loss. Kate disappears, never to be found again.

Adam Mars-Jones is one of the few critics to point out the extreme improbability of this event: 'the actual circumstances of the disappearance are curiously unconvincing...it is less important [to McEwan] to be plausible than to defend a fictional father against accusations of negligence'.[40] Kate is described vividly, lovingly and realistically. Stephen is presented as a caring father as well as a 'new

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[35] A.C. Cain and B.S. Cain investigate this problem in 'On Replacing a Child', *Journal of American Academic Child Psychiatry*, no 3 (1964), 443 - 56.
[36] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 16.
[37] Boyd Tonkin, 'In at the Birth', *The New Statesman* (18 Sept. 1987), p. 28.
[38] Anthony Quinn, 'Something Nasty in the Suitcase: *The Innocent*', *The Independent* (12 May 1990), p. 28.
[39] Allen, *The Face of the Deep*, p. 110.
[40] Mars-Jones, *Venus Envy*, p. 20.

man'. At the beginning of the story he is torn between this role and his wish to stay in bed with his wife: 'He deferred pleasure, he caved in to duty' (*CT*, p. 14). This sort of ambivalence is the ordinary experience of every parent. The wish to lose a child is common although the reality of such a loss produces grief reactions which are among the most difficult to resolve.

McEwan was married in 1982 when he was 34 years old and his first son, William, was born a year later. This novel was begun about this time: 'I was about to become a father, and my thoughts were narrowed and intensified' (*MA*, p. XXV). This rite of passage is known to revive memories and feelings about one's own conception, birth and infancy:

> In the last part of the pregnancy, fathers tend to sort out their relationship to their own fathers...[they] need to turn to their own fathers (in fantasy or in reality) to bolster their emerging parental role. This anchoring of new roles with old childhood models is a theme that comes up again as parental identity unfolds...[41]

McEwan implies that Stephen's (and by implication his own) problems are solved with the birth of the new child. As he retraces his way past 'The Bell':

> he understood that his experience there had not only been reciprocal with his parents', it had been a continuation, a kind of repetition. He had a premonition followed instantly by a certainty...that all the sorrow, all the empty waiting had been enclosed within meaningful time, within the richest unfolding conceivable. (*CT*, p. 211)

Kate seems to be a personification of 'this child within me which is still very strong'.[42] She is the archetypal child who is trust, hope, playfulness, innocent acceptance of life in an everlasting present and limitless human potential. The mechanism of condensation, seems here to have brought together McEwan's 'internalised child' and the important rite of passage which changes a man into a father. Adam Mars-Jones has called this novel 'the most sustained meditation on paternity in literature'.[43]

The one serious trauma which McEwan accepts as his own and draws upon in this narrative is the scene at the airport which he described in 'An Only Childhood'[44] and ten years later almost verbatim to Alan Franks:

> 'Once, when I was at Tripoli Airport, on the plane coming back to England, I saw my parents waving at me through the window. They had thought I was waving at them, but in fact I had been crying, and wiping the tears from my face'. His parents, who are still alive[45] did not know of this until they read it in...*The Child in Time*.[46]

This scene appears in *The Child in Time*:

> The propellers on his side of the plane started up. He saw his mother turn and dab at her

[41] Berry Brazelton, and Cramer, *The Earliest Relationship*, p. 38.
[42] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.
[43] Mars-Jones, *Venus Envy*, p. 19.
[44] Ian McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', *The Observer* (31 Jan. 1982), p. 41.
[45] McEwan's father died in 1996.
[46] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.

> eyes. His father put his hands in his pockets and took them out again. Stephen was old enough to know that a period of his life, a time of unambiguous affinities, was over. He pressed his face against the window and began to cry...When he tried to wipe it clear his parents mistook the movement of his hand and waved again. (*CT*, p. 74)

Importantly, it reappears in the paranormal scene where Stephen, as an embryo in his mother's womb, waves to his parents in 'The Bell': 'Absurdly, he raised his hand and made an awkward gesture, something between a wave and a salute...A cold, infant despondency sank through him, a bitter sense of exclusion and longing' (*CT*, p. 59). He could not have exorcised this moment of truth completely, because it appears again in *The Innocent* when Maria and Glass are waving Leonard off at the airport. It is his suspicion (wrong as it turns out later) of their betrayal that holds Leonard back from getting in touch with Maria for thirty years:

> He had his right hand half-raised to wave. There was a man at her side...It was Glass...They both waved, like parents to a departing child...He had a window seat on the terminal side. He fussed with his seat belt, trying not to look out. It was irresistible. They seemed to know just which little round window was his. They were looking right at him and continuing to wave their insulting goodbye. (*I*, p. 228)

The father in *The Child in Time*, the suspected rival in *The Innocent* (Glass) and the non-existent 'hot little bearded fuck-goat of a post-graduate' in *Enduring Love* (*EL*, p. 105) demonstrate the transference of Oedipal jealousy from the father to successive father substitutes and rivals. In *Enduring Love* the same pattern is repeated: prolonged blissful closeness, interrupted by sudden tragedy, a brief phase of increased intimacy, followed by a long interval of coldness, suspicions of betrayal and a separation which is not made up until the very end of the story.

Painful though it is to be rejected in hot anger or cold contempt, it is more hurtful and humiliating to be let go of easily, as if the parting was not important. This message can be received accidentally, when people try to hide their feelings in the hope of making the separation easier and possibly grieve in private later. The airport scene in *The Innocent* seems to describe this: 'They [Leonard and Maria] were being merry because they were about to part' (*I*, p. 226).[47] In personal recollection this appears as: 'As we drove out across the semi-dessert to the airstrip we were all three intent on being brave. There was cheery talk about the next holiday and there were long silences'.[48] McEwan spoke about a '30-year sulk'[49] which separated Leonard and Maria. It was around thirty years between his 'rejection' to boarding school and the writing of *The Child in Time* and *The Innocent* (elements of both novels seemed to live in his mind together). Maria may be expressing McEwan's

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[47] There are echoes here of the manic defence employed by Jenny and the protagonist on the last day of their summer holiday in 'Last Day of Summer', *First Love, Last Rites*.
[48] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[49] Hattenstone, 'Slaughter of the Innocent', p. 10.

retrospective reproach when she writes from Cedar Rapids in 1987: 'It was wrong of you to retreat with your anger and silence. So English! So male! If you felt betrayed you should have...accused me [mother?], you should have accused Bob [father?]' (*I*, p. 242). This has the authentic note of an aggrieved child's angry complaint. This scene repeated again and again seems to condense the feelings of separation, loss and betrayal. It harks back to the Oedipal theme, where the parents are discovered to belong together and the mother is experienced as betraying the boy with his father. There is murderous anger and crushing disappointment in this realisation, particularly if the mother-son bond has been close and the father has been distant or absent. The child is apparently loved, wanted and tenderly cared for. In spite of this, the mother elects to stay with the father and agrees to, or colludes with, the boy's departure to a strange place, a very long way from home. It is not surprising that the father should want to be rid of him. After all, even in the child's romantic fantasy, he is described as 'an ogre'[50] but that the mother should passively acquiesce with the separation is beyond understanding or forgiveness. It often happens, that when trust is undermined suddenly, the pain causes a collapse of the central constructs on which the view of the world has been built from the beginning. The child who believes that his mother would never willingly part with him, under any circumstances, must now carry out complicated operations on his inner world to make some sense of his rejection from the family, especially if there had been no death or other understandable catastrophe to bring the parting about. McEwan may have been aware of his mother's distress at their separation and expresses this in another context when he says of another mother, during a different crisis: 'it was the child's absolute trust that had broken her up; the boy believed he was safe beneath the covers cuddling against his mother, and because he was not...she felt she had betrayed him' (*CT*, p. 163). His mother's failure to prevent his departure from home brings into question the sincerity of her earlier devotion. What if neither parent really wanted him at all? It is the search for the answer to this question that makes the time shift and the paranormal experience necessary in order to reach right back to the very beginning and find the 'good mother' who was lost at the airport.

It can be supposed that at that moment of truth, McEwan had lost contact with the internalised child and repressed or struggled with disillusionment, rage and despair. It is not surprising therefore that one of the main themes, running through his work, is innocence and its tragic loss. June, in *Black Dogs*, could be speaking for McEwan when she says of her meeting with the dogs, also referred to

[50] In this context it is worth remembering that it was Laius who ordered the death of the infant Oedipus and Jocasta agreed to it.

repeatedly throughout that novel:

> you wait until you come to make sense of your life...you'll do what I've done, single out a certain event, find in something ordinary and explicable a means of expressing what might otherwise be lost to you - a conflict, a change of heart, a new understanding. (*BD*, p. 59)

The writing of *The Child in Time* may have afforded McEwan the opportunity to re-enact the trauma in fantasy in order to confront it in consciousness. This may account for the curious pattern of events set in train by Kate's disappearance and makes it possible to draw surprising parallels in Stephen's reactions to loss in childhood, which surface in his life script as an adult. The assumption that Julie is carrying the transference of the complex of grief and loss for McEwan's mother can be used to explain Stephen's irrational separation from her and his totally unjustified anger and lack of empathy with her distress. He feels that he has lost the closeness with Julie around which he had built his life and had come to depend on, so that their 'old intimacy, their habitual assumption that they were on the same side, was dead' (*CT*, p. 24).

Immediately after Kate's disappearance, there is a time during which Stephen and Julie are very much together. In *The Innocent*, immediately after Otto's murder, Leonard and Maria are an efficient team, with Maria in charge. She even packs Leonard two heavy suitcases. This is repeated as late as *Enduring Love* when Joe and Clarissa are very close immediately after the balloon accident. This is the stage of shock and denial. It is tempting to equate this period with the time immediately before his departure to school, while he and his mother were engaged in preparations and both tried to pretend that boarding school would not be the tragedy they both feared and which in fact it turned out to be. Following the trauma Julie becomes paralysed with grief and spends all day sitting in a chair in front of an empty grate. Maria stays in Germany while Leonard returns to England. Clarissa goes to work, leaving Joe alone in the house. It is their acceptance of the situation that infuriates Stephen, Leonard and Joe. Denial is evident in the description of Stephen's first term at school:

> a blur of complex rites, brutalities and constant noise, but he was not particularly sad...He remained at heart a member of his little family group, and ticked off the ninety-one days until the Christmas holidays, determined to survive. (*CT*, p. 74)

This description matches of McEwan's own memories: 'I ticked off the days of that interminable first term like a convict in a cell'.[51] This parallels the hectic phase of searching for Kate, while Julie remains at home (Leonard rushes around Berlin trying to deposit his suitcases and Joe immerses himself in a search of the psychiatric literature). Then, as earlier, Stephen, Leonard and Joe

[51] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.

anaesthetise their feelings with over-activity:

> It was only when it was time to return to England, the day after his twelfth birthday, to start again at the foot of another mountain of days, that he began to feel keenly for what he was about to leave...from now on, three quarters of his life were to be spent away. He had, in fact, left home. (*CT*, p. 74)

Once he is left alone, Stephen is able to be 'still for the first time in weeks' (*CT*, p. 25). Only then does he realise that: 'Everything before had been fantasy, a routine and frenetic mimicry of sorrow...he began to cry, and it was from this moment...that he was to date his time of mourning' (*CT*, p. 26). McEwan describes a similar experience: 'I mark the end of my childhood by the end of that first holiday home from school...I had a distinct intimation then that...a time of unambiguous only child affinities was over and I began to cry'.[52] This marks the change from the second to the third stage of grief, from overactivity in the service of denial to despair. It continues painfully throughout the whole book and lasts until the birth of the new child.

Anger is very much a part of the second and third stages of grief. The interesting thing about Stephen's anger is that it focuses on Julie who, by his own admission, is 'a devoted mother, passionately attached to her child, a loving parent' (*CT*, p. 21). There is nothing to suggest that she blames him for Kate's disappearance, in spite of the fact that she is stolen while in his care. Her heart-rending wretchedness evokes no sympathy in him. Anger usually focuses on people close to the afflicted person who are trying to help: nurses, doctors, police, priests or God himself. The breakdown in the relationship between Stephen and Julie (as well as Leonard and Maria, and Clarissa and Joe) is due to irrational, unexpressed anger. As time goes on, silence and mutual incomprehension settles between them: 'He was angry with Julie...But he could not speak to her about it. There was no room for anger, no openings' (*CT*, p. 24). This may be based on his own experience: 'when I returned home I was unable and unwilling to describe my new life to my anxious parents'.[53]

In the book, the rift is presented as a gender difference. There is no support for this opinion from Bowlby's research, which shows that women are just as capable of denial, active searching and open expressions of rage in grief, as men. Some reviewers, notably Sheila MacLeod, follow McEwan in attributing the couple's different styles of mourning to gender:

> They are operating in two distinct modes. Stephen's is full of what Winnicott would have called 'false male doing'...Julie's is the mode of Lao-Tze in that 'by non action there is nothing which cannot be effected'.[54]

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[52] *Ibid.*
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] MacLeod, 'A Child of Our Time', p. 13.

The third stage of grief is established during the second term at school, after the holiday and repeated during Stephen and Julie's separation. Despair and apathy contain tender memories when Stephen feels: 'disposed to gentler currents of vague longing and remorse. He heard Julie's voice, not speaking words and sentences, but her voice in abstract - its pitch...' (*CT*, p. 137). This chimes in with the preverbal memories of the mother's voice, heard in infancy, when it brought comfort and love. Seen from this perspective, Julie seems to speak for McEwan when she justifies the separation:

> Important matters would have been buried if I'd called you then. I came out here to face up to losing Kate. It was my task...more important to me than our marriage, or my music. It was more important than the new baby. (*CT*, p. 213)

Time is needed to relive the trauma and to recall and possibly allow the return of repressed feelings from before this period. The apparently cold-blooded method of keeping in touch by post cards and brief occasional meetings also recreates the original period of separation, when there must have been letters and cards from home and later holiday visits.

Finally, it is possible to make sense of the curious episode when Stephen visits Julie, apparently on an impulse, and experiences in her home and in her bed an intense sense of belonging and home-coming, but leaves very soon afterwards. McEwan recalls his own memory: 'The three of us had picked up on our lives together easily enough, but when it came for me to return to England I knew this time exactly what I was returning to, and I felt keenly for what I was leaving'.[55] From this point of view, Stephen's brief return to Julie may represent McEwan's first, memorable holiday from boarding school when he temporarily and briefly returned to the old intimacy with his mother: 'Back home...he resumed his place easily enough in the triangle' (*CT*, p. 74), only to be sent away once more. Julie, the loyal wife and bereaved mother, continues to love her husband in spite of their separation but never forgets the lost child and grieves inwardly and passively:

> For years afterwards he would be baffled by his insistence on not returning to see her. At the time he argued it this way: Julie had never summoned him. He had initiated the visit himself. She was happy enough to see him, just as happy to see him go and to resume her solitude. (*CT*, p. 67)

This may well be modelled on McEwan's mother who was unable to keep him at home despite her own sadness so that he eventually resorted to unsuccessful efforts to forget her. Julie's identification with a powerful mother figure who could summon or dismiss him at will seems complete and there is an abdication of his own power and responsibility, due to his regression to a child ego state: 'He could learn not to love her, just so long as he could see her from time to time and be reminded that she was

[55] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.

mortal, a woman in her late thirties, intent on solitude, on making sense of her own troubled life' (*CT*, p. 66). The occasional meetings and postcards only emphasise the gulf between them: 'Being together heightened their sense of loss...If there was love it was buried beyond their reach' (*CT*, p. 53). Matters may have rested there between McEwan and his parents until he was about to become a parent himself. There is no reason to suppose he expressed or acted out any of his hostility towards them. In this novel both Mr. and Mrs. Lewis grieve deeply for the loss of Kate. In spite of this, Stephen needs to go all the way back in time to a moment in his intra-uterine life to reassure himself about his mother's love. This experience of rebirth is intimately connected with the conception of his second child. Both Stephen himself, and Stephen's second child, had been conceived as the result of 'a temporary, irresponsible intimacy' (*CT*, p. 116), and both his mother and his wife are angered by the inconvenience and consider abortion. However, each for her own reasons comes to love and accept the baby.[56] McEwan seems to have exorcised some of his resentment, fear and sadness by overlaying his own experience as a man and potential father over the imagined experiences of his parents when he himself was a foetus. This strategy gives him the opportunity to review his past life from the very beginning, putting the father in a less negative light now that he himself has some experience of the anxieties and vicissitudes of the parent role, and allowing his mother to step down from the pedestal of childish adoration but retain the qualities of courage, protectiveness and strength.

The story is told as a paranormal experience. Stephen sees his young, engaged parents, while he remains himself and also becomes the foetus in his mother's womb. His father suggests an abortion and his mother considers this seriously but rejects it and ensures that her fiancee marries her and lives up to his responsibilities. This scene is described from three different points of view. As himself, Stephen feels: 'taut with expectation, as though a spirit, suspended between existence and nothingness, attended a decision, a beckoning or a dismissal...' (*CT*, p. 59). Simultaneously, as the foetus:

> His eyes grew large and round and lidless with desperate, protesting innocence, his knees rose under him and touched his chin, his fingers were scaly flippers, gills beat time, urgent, hopeless strokes through the salty ocean that engulfed the tree tops and surged between their roots. (*CT*, p. 60)

There are echoes here of 'the creature' from 'First Love, Last Rites' but Stephen's embryonic self is accepted by his mother. From Mrs. Lewis's point of view, the face she saw at the window was:

> a complete self, begging her for its existence, and it was inside her, unfolding intricately, living off the pulse of her own blood...it was a person. She felt herself to be in love with it, whoever it was. A love affair had begun. (*CT*, p. 175)

[56] Jocasta saved the infant Oedipus in spite of Laius' expressed orders. The story begins with attempted filicide and moves on to parricide later.

Kiernan Ryan states that: 'It is as if Stephen has been plucked from the future to ensure his own survival by intervening in the past' (*Ryan*, p. 50). Primary process thinking has condensed the 'crime' of sending him to boarding school with the theft of the child (Kate), symbolic for his childhood, and the suspicion that the parents wished to abort him (rip him out of the womb of home before he was ready). This complex is transferred, from Stephen's mother, to the mother of his child (Julie). In fact, from an adult point of view, both these mothers are blameless, but it was his own mother who evoked the boy's anger and wish for revenge. He represses this, and years later visits it on his wife. The 'sin' is finally redeemed in the 'moment of truth', during his intra-uterine life.

The curious episode of delivering the lorry driver prefigures Stephen's delivery of his new child. The comments by critics about this have been very mixed. Adam Mars-Jones notes that there is 'something slyly obstetrical about Stephen's handiwork with the jack'.[57] He highlights the fact that the wreckage is compared to: 'a tightly closed fist, or a toothless mouth held shut' and 'a vertical gash in the steel' (*CT*, p. 96). He demonstrates that the images here are predominantly negative:

> A man may think of childbirth as a mystery, as an apotheosis, or simply as an enviable power; or he may think of it as a piece of indifferent machinery, a bleeding trap, even an atrocity. This passage represents the second set of images, disavowed elsewhere in this determinedly feminism-friendly novel, tolerated here only in disguise and at some considerable distance from an appropriate context - as a gentle child might disfigure a doll and bury it far from the house.[58]

He dismisses these experiences as an extended Couvade Syndrome as well as an attempt to 'upstage or to appropriate potent moments in the lives of women'.[59] He feels that McEwan's attitude to femininity is based on envy and mistrust:

> In many Third World cultures...Men simulate the process of delivery, going through its various phases and manifestations...Through this 'play', they dramatise their envy of the procreating woman and their disappointment at being left out...Expectant fathers experience...turmoil and symptoms [which] show convincingly that a man's wish to be pregnant, to be like the mother and the wife, is reawakened during pregnancy.[60]

In spite of Stephen's sense of the sacredness of the birth, he had escaped into self-absorbed suffering and absented himself for the whole of the pregnancy, denying all possibility of it, so that he may, after all, belong to that group of men who: 'withdraw, ignoring what is going on...developing alcoholism...This kind of acting out may be based on the reawakening of bisexual conflicts...[or] the man's sense of being displaced'.[61] Kiernan Ryan highlights the fact that:

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[57] Mars-Jones, *Venus Envy*, p. 31.
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[60] Berry Brazelton, and Cramer, *The Earliest Relationship*, p. 38.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

> The long journey from ejaculation to parturition is telescoped into one short sequence which edits out the child's gestation within the mother. The scene arrogates control to the father, creating the illusion that the act of insemination instantly precipitates the birth. (*Ryan*, p. 53)

Female reviewers tend towards a more benevolent view of McEwan's attitude to procreation. Sheila MacLeod describes this book as a 'feminine novel' but not in the sense that it could have been written by a woman.[62] Mary Hope judges it: 'in essence soft-centred, as if he was the only male writer ever to have fathered a child'.[63] Some experts acknowledge that while the politically correct father is encouraged by obstetricians and paediatricians to be intimately involved with pregnancy, parturition and baby-care:

> we must recognise that the lingering traces of exclusion which fathers still experience have deep roots in widespread historical and cross-cultural practice. The 'gatekeeping' seen even in working mothers today still serves to keep fathers at a distance.[64]

It seems probable that McEwan, aware as he is of the primitive violent urges that can surface from the unconscious, fears that parents cannot be trusted to care for children properly (before or after birth) and is struggling to create a character in Stephen Lewis who tries to come to grips with the infinite complexities of living and loving in an imperfect world, where the innocent and vulnerable are likely to be seriously hurt. The hopeful note at the end of this novel which seems to promise rebirth, redemption and reconciliation is only partially borne out by his later work. Adam Mars-Jones writes:

> when an acclaimed novelist, much admired for his cultivated scabrous cynicism, announces a concern for huge issues...the question should still be asked: what territory is being defended, consciously or unconsciously, by these manoeuvres?[65]

In *The Child in Time* this territory seems to be the pain of loss of love and imperfect parents who prove nevertheless to be 'good enough'. There is a very real sense of loose ends having been tied up, unconscious conflicts confronted and worked through and grief and sadness from the past being laid to rest at last.

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[62] MacLeod, 'A Child of Our Time', p. 13.
[63] Hope, 'Cool Descent into Hell', p. 15.
[64] Berry Brazelton, and Cramer, *The Earliest Relationship*, p. 40.
[65] Mars-Jones, *Venus Envy*, p. 8.

Chapter 8 - *The Innocent*

> As long as we cannot up-level our 'thinking' beyond US and THEM, the goodies and baddies, it will go on and on. The only possible end will be when all the goodies have killed all the baddies, and all the baddies all the goodies which does not seem so difficult or unlikely since, to US we are the goodies and THEY are the baddies, while to THEM, we are the baddies and they are the goodies.[1]

The Innocent is McEwan's second full length novel. It was finished in 1989 and first published in 1990:

> The accessibility of *The Innocent*, written in a simpler style with more attention to plot, helped make it McEwan's most popular work. It was on the best sellers list in the United States and in England...and it has also given McEwan his biggest commercial success...(Paramount Pictures purchased the film rights before the novel was published). (*Slay*, p. 134)

This is a book about male concerns in an adult, masculine world. It is an adventure story, described by Nigel Andrews as: 'a bizarre blend of Le Carre spy stuff with sex, passion and murder'.[2] Michael Dibdin sees in it: 'a fascinating new development for McEwan: a solid, four-square work of fiction set firmly in the British realist tradition, full of intriguing possibilities for character-driven plot development'.[3] John Carey stresses the excitement: 'you are torn between itching to turn the page and dreading what you will find on the other side'.[4] The balance of fantasy and reality is very carefully maintained and research and meticulous attention to detail is evident.

The place and the time, Berlin in 1955, are instantly recognisable. He describes Berlin in such realistic detail that Anne McElvoy complains:

> With the linguistic twirls of an uninspired travel writer, McEwan insists on letting us know that he has been to Berlin. Food is rendered doggedly in German, street names catalogued with painful exactitude and hyperactive Germanisms pop up with disconcerting randomness in the flow of prose.[5]

The Berlin Tunnel or Operation Gold was a joint CIA - MI6 venture and operated for just under a year until April 1956. McEwan first read about Operation Gold in *Spycatcher*. His efforts to discover more about it were frustrated by the Official Secrets Act and he finally went to America and obtained his information through the American Freedom of Information Act.

George Blake lived in Berlin at that time. He was sentenced in 1961 to forty-two years in prison and his brief appearances and interesting role in the plot add authenticity to the story. McEwan

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[1] R.D. Laing, *The Politics of the Family* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971), p. 124.
[2] Nigel Andrews, 'Cautionary Tales of the Cultural Divide', *The Financial Times* (23 June 1994), p. 19.
[3] Michael Dibdin, 'Suitcase of Horrors in Berlin: *The Innocent*', *The Independent on Sunday* (6 May 1990), p. 16.
[4] Carey, 'Tunnel of Love', p. 1.
[5] Anne McElvoy, 'The Finer Points of Disembowelling', *The Times* (10 May 1990), p. 21.

reviewed George Blake's autobiography *No Other Choice* in *The Independent*.[6] Here McEwan sets out to investigate: 'the truth which is revealed unwittingly'. He judges Blake's conversion from Christianity to Communism[7] and his decision to spy for the Russians as 'a terrible error of judgement'. He acknowledges his courage, together with 'an appalling innocence and an eerie emotional detachment'. Interesting here is Penny Allen's opinion of McEwan: 'When I first met him he was very innocent about life...He is more sophisticated and urbane now'.[8] He restricts his moral censure to a mention of the 'more than four hundred agents' whom Blake had exposed to the KGB and highlights the 'chillingly guiltless aside that he [Blake] finds it ironic that since the democratic revolutions in [the European satellite] countries, he is no longer able to travel there freely'.[9] McEwan seems to catch this tone in Leonard Marnham's explanations: 'To have betrayed the tunnel? A sad necessity, given everything else that had gone before' (*I*, p. 216). His 'innocent' assuages his feelings of guilt without lengthy soul-searching or political conversion. Leonard feels it was reasonable 'To have deceived Glass, the sentries, the duty officer and MacNamee...But only to protect them from unpleasant facts, which did not concern them' (*I*, p. 216). There is no sense of the immorality of his treason. The outcome is blurred by Blake's earlier betrayal of Operation Gold to the KGB but this can have no bearing on Leonard's conduct as he knew nothing about it until much later: 'the tunnel was not on his conscience. If it was right to spy on the Americans for MacNamee's interests, it was fine to sell the tunnel for his own' (*I*, p. 222). Even young children understand that 'two wrongs don't make a right'. Leonard escapes not only guilt but exposure and punishment for an impressive sequence of crimes and spends the next thirty years in freedom and comfort so that for him, unlike Blake, there is neither regret nor 'a lifetime of consequences'.[10]

McEwan said of himself: 'I had some rather too well-formed thoughts on history and memory, and public and private morality' (*MA*, p. XXIV). Clearly, this is not the conventional morality of his parents' generation when 'the only good German was a dead German' and who spoke of 'heroism and sacrifice' (*I*, p. 83). Even so, Leonard's complete lack of loyalty to his country strikes the reader forcibly.

The atmosphere of the time of his parents' youth is gathered from fifties films: 'a time when much was made of the cigarette in the methods of seduction...learned...at his local cinema' (*MA*, p. VII).

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[6] Ian McEwan, 'The Pathology of Self-Deception: "No Other Choice" - George Blake', *The Independent* (23 Sept. 1990), p. 28.
[7] June and Bernard were both communists in their youth.
[8] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 8.
[9] McEwan, 'The Pathology of Self-Deception: "No Other Choice" - George Blake', p. 28.
[10] *Ibid.*

By setting the novel in 1955, McEwan is able to return to the time of his childhood and examine the political preoccupations of his parents' generation. The atmosphere of the Cold War, which prevailed during the 50s, gives him abundant material and suggests powerful metaphors and symbols:

> It's a minefield, politics and the novel. If you set about writing fiction with a clear intention of persuading people of a certain point of view, you cramp your field, you deny yourself the possibility of opening up an investigation...[11]

In spite of this, politics is prominent in *The Innocent*. McEwan first saw the Wall in 1963. His visit to Berlin was:

> The first time I had actually seen politics in people's lives; politics had been something my Dad cared about, not me[12]. Seeing the Wall...gave me a taste of what it meant: that politics was not a set of abstractions, but was literally concrete...It was still at the stage when there was barbed wire, not the raked sand, and houses with their windows smashed out and the new brick, the mortar frozen in place where it had squelched out.[13]

He was about fifteen then, although *The Innocent* is imagined much earlier when he was seven. At this time, even before the Wall was built, the East-West split was already established and the hypocrisy of the 'Special Relationship' between Britain and the USA was clear for all to see. Glass believes that culture evolved when man became aware of a secret: 'A secret plan, that means more individuation, more consciousness...Secrecy made us possible' (*I*, p. 38). This is very much in line with Jung's opinion:

> Anything that is concealed is a secret. The maintenance of secrets acts like a psychic poison which alienates their possessor from the community. In small doses, this poison may actually be a priceless remedy, even an essential preliminary to the differentiation of the individual. (*MM*, p. 35)

Leonard's work turns out to be a sinecure which gives him a much higher level of clearance than his actual 'need to know' because of his unwitting involvement in the 'Special Relationship': a relationship masquerading as friendship but including mutual distrust and efforts to spy on and steal information from one another. The only real requirement of the role is made clear when Glass tells him: 'Just don't screw up on security. Watch what you say, watch who you're with. Remember your compatriots, Burgess and Maclean' (*I*, p. 24).

The immediate experience which sparked off the writing of *The Innocent* was McEwan's 'visit to Moscow as a member of a European Disarmament Delegation'.[14] Daniel Johnson reports: 'he had come home with the idea of writing a novel about the end of the Cold War, and his return to Berlin

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[11] Casademont, 'The Pleasure of Prose Writing vs Pornographic Violence: An Interview with Ian McEwan', p. 44.
[12] McEwan made the same connection, almost verbatim, with the Suez crisis, when he lived in Libya, in *The Ploughman's Lunch*, p. 27.
[13] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 16.
[14] *Ibid.*

shortly after Moscow reminded him of his youth'.[15] He considered other locations but did not feel that he knew Moscow or Vienna well enough (*MA*, p. VIII). In conversation with Edward Pilkington, McEwan describes a bicycle ride in the summer of 1987 along the entire length of the Wall:

> He was in West Berlin as a guest of the city on its 750th anniversary...He became obsessed with the symbol of a divided city...That was just the start of what he calls 'an extended argument with Berlin'.[16]

Daniel Johnson had been a foreign correspondent covering the fall of the Berlin Wall. He reports:

> When the news broke, Ian and Penny McEwan had caught the next plane 'the first club-class tickets I've ever bought' and in an old copy of *Newsweek* he [McEwan] proudly showed me his own face among the crowds at the opening of the Wall at Potsdamer Platz.[17]

His uncanny ability to choose situations in the recent past which are likely to become topical once more recurs here: 'On the day the city was reunited, November 9 1989, he had already completed *The Innocent* and was waiting at home in Oxford to receive proofs'.[18] He was tempted to rewrite the end, but reserved the changes for his screen version which includes this historical event.[19] Simon Hattenstone comments: 'a readable and occasionally subtle novel has been turned into a watchable but couldn't-be-less subtle movie'.[20] Leonard's experiences in post-war Germany offer McEwan an opportunity to re-examine the received attitudes and pseudo-memories of the war years in the light of an adult understanding of war, victory and defeat:

> It was hard not to feel boyish pleasure in the thousand pounders that had lifted roofs off buildings...Twelve years before he might have spread his arms, made his engine noise and become a bomber for a celebratory minute or two. (*I*, p. 6)

Soon after his meeting with Maria, 'Germans were no longer ex-Nazis, they were Maria's compatriots' (*I*, p. 68). Like the youthful Mr and Mrs Lewis in *The Child in Time* or Bernard and June in *Black Dogs*, Maria belongs to a cycling club. The Oedipal theme is introduced early by the shadowy presence of her ex-husband Otto.

McEwan has not strayed far from his own, lower-middle class, background in creating Leonard. He is an only child. He has parents who resemble Mr and Mrs Lewis in their kindliness and who share their intellectual and cultural limitations. He is fond of his parents. Seconded temporarily by MI6 from his job in the Post Office, he writes home regularly and returns for Christmas. McEwan must have had Leonard Marnham in mind when he spoke of: 'a version of yourself, but ferociously

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[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Edward Pilkington, 'Berlin Mon Amour', *The Guardian* (13 June 1992), p. 29.
[17] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 16.
[18] Pilkington, 'Berlin Mon Amour', p. 29.
[19] McEwan returned to the site of The Tunnel in May 1989 (as described in the postscript to *The Innocent*).
[20] Hattenstone, 'Slaughter of the Innocent', p. 10.

organised, meticulous, manipulable and socially inept, someone you might have become if your luck had been really atrocious' (*MA*, p. VIII). He does not give Leonard his own military background but imagines him spending a 'lonely three years' (*I*, p. 61) in Birmingham University[21] where he studied science and later worked in London. Marnham is one of the few important characters in McEwan's fiction who is not connected with writing. He does not share McEwan's post-graduate studies, or the bohemian phase[22] in his early twenties, and until his arrival in Germany had conventional attitudes and conservative tastes. On arrival in Berlin he is virginal, shy and awkward. If McEwan had chosen science at A level, as he originally intended, he might have settled for a safe and regular job. He told William Leith: 'I knew from inside the awkwardness that was his'.[23]

At twenty-five, Leonard leaves home to work in Germany and establishes a relationship with a German woman five years his senior who has considerable sexual experience and is able to teach him all about sex in a loving relationship. There is no danger of pregnancy and Leonard is in charge of contraception: 'He found out from Glass that he was entitled to a free supply [of condoms] through the US Army' (*I*, p. 82). Daniel Johnson learned that in his teens, McEwan had been 'rather achingly in love'[24] with his French penfriend, who lived in the French sector of Berlin. Leonard perceives Maria as a mysterious anima figure:

> It was the sort of face, the sort of manner, onto which men were likely to project their own requirements. One could read womanly power into her silent abstraction, or find a childlike dependency in her quiet attentiveness. (*I*, p. 47)

The couple retreat into an intimacy based on physical closeness and the desire to withdraw from the outside world. They descend to the now familiar McEwanesque absorption in each other's bodies, heedless of hygiene, conventions or traditional expectations, reminiscent of the early symbiotic phase between mother and infant: 'His world had contracted to a windowless room and the bed he shared with Maria' (*I*, p. 64). The contrast between this abandonment to the senses and the stilted and artificial atmosphere of Colin and Mary's sex life is very dramatic: 'They used expensive, duty-free colognes and powders on their bodies' (*CS*, p. 13). Leonard and Maria share a private paradise based on non-verbal communications in a spirit of rapturous delight and acceptance of the reality of smells, secretions and sensations: 'He had never in his life felt so uncomplicatedly happy' (*I*, p. 81). According to Jung this is an important phase of falling in love, where people rediscover themselves as individuals:

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[21] McEwan went to Sussex University (1967 - 70) and read English and French, but had wanted to go to King's College Cambridge and sometimes wished he had studied science.
[22] McEwan travelled to Afghanistan in 1972.
[23] Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', p. 9.
[24] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.

> The attractive power of the psyche brings about a new self-estimation - a re-estimation of the basic facts of human nature...this leads to the rediscovery of the body after its long depreciation in the name of the spirit. (*MM*, p. 253)

This happy episode turns out to be short-lived. Freedom to express early fantasies together with possible resentment of Maria's dominant role, opens up previously repressed anal phase issues of power and control in transference from the anal phase mother to Maria: 'There was an element of mind creeping in, of bits of himself, bits he did not really like...he started having thoughts that he was powerless to send away when he was making love' (*I*, p. 82). Storr believes that:

> men very frequently have sexual fantasies in which they behave sadistically...There is generally a wide gap between fantasy and reality, in that men who find themselves the prey of sadistic imaginations seldom actually hurt their partners, whom they wish to enjoy the role of helpless victim....most men who are possessed by such thoughts are actually over-considerate, less demanding and less aggressive than is generally expected of the male. [25]

This 'element of mind' is clearly the unconscious mind, the id or shadow where thoughts and feelings incompatible with the personality live and move and have their being, until the return of the repressed material, under suitable conditions: 'In recollection these formulations embarrassed him and he pushed them aside. They were alien to his obliging and kindly nature, they offended his sense of what was reasonable' (*I*, p. 83).

At first Leonard and Maria are strangers, and his higher status and better circumstances, together with her easy virtue, put her into an inferior position. Like Charles, in *The Child in Time*, Leonard has a split libido: 'The man almost always feels his respect for the woman acting as a restriction on his sexual activity, and only develops full potency when he is with a debased sexual object'.[26] As they get onto a more intimate footing, Maria's dominance in the relationship is established and he needs to regain the upper hand, denigrating her in his fantasy to bolster his potency and enjoyment. He rationalises this as a received anti-German attitude of hostility left over from the War:

> German. Enemy. Mortal enemy. Defeated enemy. This last brought with it a shocking thrill...To be right, to win, to be rewarded...He was powerful and magnificent...He was victorious and good and strong and free. (*I*, p. 83)

Leonard is not thinking about Maria. He is helpless before the power of the unconscious, where oral, anal and phallic phase fantasies have become confused so that physical intimacy, issues of power, and sexual satisfaction have become blended. The danger is that he can only attain sexual fulfilment in the context of these fantasies: 'His private theatre had become insufficient. He wanted something between them. A reality, not a fantasy...He wanted his power recognised and Maria to suffer from it, just a bit,

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[25] Storr, *Human Aggression*, p. 91.
[26] Freud, *On Sexuality*, p. 254.

in the most pleasurable way' (*I*, p. 85). In time Leonard could have been taken over by this complex, but the substitution of Otto for Maria, like Colin in *The Comfort of Strangers* and the rat in 'First Love, Last Rites', spares the beloved yet allows the script to be performed to the end.

The phallic phase is recreated by focusing Leonard and Maria's thoughts and feelings around Otto: 'They stood back to back, ready to face their common enemy...Otto was always with them' (*I*, p. 126). Leonard's fantasies about power and victory find a new outlet in imagining confrontations with Maria's ex-husband and therefore the symbolic Oedipal father: 'He disarmed Otto with his knife, and in the same movement broke his arm with fastidious regret and "I warned you not to get rough"' (*I*, p. 127). Otto's position in the Oedipal triangle is emphasised when Leonard mistakes Maria's signs of fear of Otto for sexual excitement in response to himself, while he is making love to her in the ex-marital bed. Initially he is a passive and frightened observer of the violent marital row, which excludes him and revolves around Maria's infidelity and the possession of their ex-marital home. It is not until she is losing the argument that she appeals to Leonard for help. The detailed description of the fight is arguably more shocking and disgusting than the much commented on dismemberment scene which follows it: 'He folded over, and his head came level with Otto's, his cheek grazed his, and he turned and opened his mouth and bit deep into Otto's face' (*I*, p. 156). Maria sets up this scene, provokes this fight and is about to kill her ex-husband. Leonard, like a little boy with quarrelling parents, 'could only...participate' (*I*, p. 157). Much later he makes an effort to rationalise his actions so that he can continue to cling to the idea of himself as innocent, in spite of murder and betrayal:

> And what was the essence of his crime? To have killed Otto? But that was self-defence. He had broken into the bedroom, he had attacked. Not to have reported the death? But that was only sensible, given that no one would have believed them. (*I*, p. 216)

These, like Leonard's other rationalisations, have the quality of child-like excuses for bad behaviour reminiscent of McEwan's childhood courtroom game.[27]

McEwan may have suspected an outcry from critics and readers about the dismemberment scene because he offers two separate justifications for it in the novel itself: 'To have cut up the body? But it was already dead then, so what difference could it make' (*I*, p. 216). While actually carrying out the operation, he returns to his previous war-time fantasies. It is as if his wish to violate Maria has transferred itself to Otto, who is presented as an ex-Nazi as well as a worthless and dangerous person. In this respect, he more closely approximates to the idea of a defeated enemy. However, it is not

[27] From the age of eight until ten, McEwan used to fill his solitary walks with mental games built around imagined courtroom scenes where 'the defendant, who happened to be innocent, explained his behaviour and motives to a deeply sceptical judge...this became for [him] a means of self-observation and exploration', McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.

justifiable to use a single member of a defeated nation as a representative for the group without some public rite or ritual (e.g. the Nuremberg trials). Using Otto to act out oral sadistic fantasies seems to be stretching a metaphor beyond the bounds of what most people would consider acceptable:

> What was on the table now was no one at all. It was the field of operations, it was a city far below he had been ordered to destroy...then the big one, the thighs, the big push, and that would be it, home, a hot bath, a debriefing. (*I*, p. 178)

This explanation did not persuade the critics and McEwan's elaborations of it in interviews did not impress them either. Daniel Johnson quotes McEwan:

> [In our time] were a number of events of extraordinary cruelty and violence which we still haven't fully tried to come to terms with. It probably stands for us as...a representation of our own evil...to find in one man a story in which you see him learn to love and then take him plausibly through an act of great barbarity, and yet to have him still proclaim his innocence, was for me to try to write something about what it was like to live at the end of the twentieth century.[28]

This same idea is expressed again two years later in an interview with Rosa Gonzalez Casademont: 'I wanted to show the brutality man can aspire to by comparing the dismemberment of a corpse to the dismemberment of a city: the bomb-devastated Berlin of the post-war'.[29] Andrew Billen quotes McEwan:

> In retrospect, I think...The minute attention to detail[30] in that description which I thought at the time was so central, severely unbalanced people's responses...People were so thrown by it that it became the only thing they seemed to see in the book.[31]

Billen seems to side with McEwan in complaints about other critics' unjustified highlighting of the dismemberment scene:

> critics in 1990 concentrated on just seven pages of...*The Innocent*. The book was about the loss of sexual innocence, the cold war, espionage and Berlin. The seven pages, however, and hence the reviews were about cutting up a corpse.[32]

Michael Dibdin comments on but does not criticise the scene: 'we are treated - and it must be said that for fans of the macabre it is a royal treat - to the spectacle of the couple sawing up Otto's body and packing the pieces into suitcases'.[33] Anthony Quinn describes the incident as 'very McEwanesque' and comments that: 'it scarcely belongs in this novel...this central sequence has the unfortunate effect of eclipsing just about everything else around it'.[34] Several critics mention the humour in the meeting with

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[28] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.
[29] Casademont, 'The Pleasure of Prose Writing vs Pornographic Violence: An Interview with Ian McEwan', p. 41.
[30] Dr. M. Dunnill, who was a lecturer in Pathology in Merton College, Oxford, had been consulted about the details of the famous dismemberment scene.
[31] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] Dibdin, 'Suitcase of Horrors in Berlin: *The Innocent*', p. 16.
[34] Quinn, 'Something Nasty in the Suitcase: *The Innocent*', p. 28.

the dog. Miriam Berkley enjoys 'its sheer, mirthful heartlessness'.[35] This seems to be a manic defence and reflects a wish to move away from horror on the part of both author and reviewer:

> The last part of the book is a hilarious account of the young man's attempts to rid himself of his obnoxious burden...A dog smells their contents and tries frantically to avenge the canine species for centuries of subjugation.[36]

In writing the film script for *The Innocent* McEwan made sure that the scene was judiciously cut: 'I think if we showed the body being cut up, the film would produce exactly the kind of reaction that I experienced with the novel, that it would up-end the whole thing'.[37] Anne McElvoy writes: 'Squatting darkly at the centre of the narrative is a dreadful deed, a disconcertingly itemised exposition of the evil of which love is capable'.[38] The book's preoccupation with the body, and its products, disgusting to many readers, reaches its climax in the dismemberment scene:

> In the early fiction the body had to be hidden - encased in concrete, swallowed by a river, or made invisible by the magic of solid geometry. But it was always forcing its way back from exile, smuggling itself in through smell or touch or sight. It left traces of itself in countless bodily secretions and emissions, in snot and sweat and sperm and spittle and blood. These glimpses of the moist internal texture of being betray the scandalous 'secret de tous connu' in whose preservation we all learn to conspire. (*Ryan*, p. 58)

There is, however, a price to pay and the relationship between Leonard and Maria is spoilt because 'what hung in the air between them was disgust' (*I*, p. 184).

The theme of disgust is important in McEwan's work. In spite of his own claims and the opinions of some critics that he is a moralist, he dwells briefly on the emotions of guilt, shame and remorse. His early stories offer long and vivid descriptions which arouse revulsion in the reader, although the characters are not shown to be experiencing it - another example of projective identification. In *The Innocent* there is a distinct change. Leonard and Maria are shown to be enjoying the universally realised, but seldom mentioned, aspects of sexual intimacy, heightened by conditions of poor hygiene which seem to help rather than hinder their pleasure:

> the intense emotional response induced by disgusting stimuli and activities becomes associated with sexual arousal (Kraft-Ebing 1886).[39] Nevertheless, 'normal' eroticism from kissing onwards, presumably involves a similar but limited process, specific and personalised to the sexual partner.[40]

In the dismemberment scene the taboo on desecration of the dead body and the ghoulish satisfaction of revealing the hidden organs not only repulses the reader but is shown to have this effect on Leonard.

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[35] Miriam Berkley, 'Energizing the Form Color: Ian McEwan', *Time Magazine* (25 June 1990), p. 69.
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] Tresidder, 'The Dreamer Who Creates Nightmares', p. 2.
[38] McElvoy, 'The Finer Points of Disembowelling', p. 21.
[39] R. Von Kraft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, trans., F.S. Klaft (New York: Stein and Day, 1965).
[40] M.L. Phillips, C. Senior, T. Fahy and A.S. David, 'Disgust - the Forgotten Emotion of Psychiatry' *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 172 (1998), p. 374.

Darwin (1872) defines disgust as 'something offensive to the taste'[41] and later authors, Rozin and Fallon (1987), describe it as 'revulsion at the prospect of (oral) incorporation of an offensive object':

> The prototypical objects of disgust have been identified as waste products of the human and animal body but extend to other biological substances such as blood, saliva, sweat and hair. In addition, the concept of disgust can be expanded to involve *violation of the body borders* at points other than the mouth...This concept of core disgust can be further elaborated to include...disgust at certain beliefs or behaviours...acting as a powerful means of transmitting social values.[42]

Freud considers disgust to be a reaction formation, involving the repudiation of the desired objected.[43] It seems as if, for McEwan, the coming to terms with the body involved much overcoming of disgust rehearsed in his early fiction, inflicted on his readers and eventually brought to full consciousness in the disposal of Otto.

Once Otto is not there to symbolise the Oedipal father, Leonard simply transfers his suspicions and jealousies to Glass. In retrospect, McEwan felt that: 'A mistaken gesture just didn't seem enough. A 30-year sulk...one loses sympathy for the character'.[44] In the rewrite for the film, he changes the motivation to 'heroic self denial....Maria strikes a bargain with her boyfriend's boss - you protect my lover and I'm yours forever'.[45] It is easy to agree with Simon Hattenstone that the changes reduce rather than enhance the subtlety of the story.

Leonard is not the only innocent here. The Americans, the Russians and most particularly the Germans, as individuals, are innocent of the horrors of war, partition, occupation and international tension. The divided city is a powerful symbol for splitting in the inner world. Berlin was once whole and contained the usual population of good and bad people, living together like a personality in the depressive position where: 'the all-important processes of ego integration and object synthesis as well as mitigation of hatred by love [can take place]'.[46] In the aftermath of the war, a partition took place. Impermeable frontiers were established, which prevented communication and encouraged a culture of secrecy, mistrust and spying. This parallels the splitting of the ego into good and bad parts, which are impossible to reintegrate because each part is unconscious of the other. The good part represses and disowns the bad and projects it onto other people who are experienced as an out-group, shunned, disparaged, suspected of evil intentions and treated with unremitting hostility: 'A very deep and sharp

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[41] C. Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).
[42] P. Rozin and A.E. Fallon, 'A Perspective on Disgust', *Psychological Review*, 94 (1987), 23 - 41.
[43] S. Freud, 'Character and Anal Eroticism' in *The Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud, Standard Edition*, vol. 9 (London: Hogarth Press Ltd., 1962).
[44] Hattenstone, 'Slaughter of the Innocent', p. 10.
[45] *Ibid.*
[46] Mitchel (ed.), *The Selected Melanie Klein*,. p. 217.

division between loved and hated objects indicates that destructive impulses, envy and persecutory anxiety are very strong'.[47] During the war, splitting and projection of evil onto the enemy had been encouraged in order to preserve a sense of one's own, one's nation's and one's allies' goodness and rightness and to justify ruthless behaviour.[48] After the war, envy and the fear of envy served to maintain the split, which became institutionalised in the Iron Curtain. Both sides became increasingly remote and hostile to each other. Propaganda and strict control of the media disseminated myths of prosperity and contentment in both camps. However, the enormous difference between the wealth of the USA shared with their sector and the poverty of the USSR, together with their policy of exploitation of subject nations, could be seen at a glance in Berlin. In the uneasy peace the control of information and disinformation became the concern of governments and special departments like MI6, CIA and KGB. Individuals felt trapped in this system and blameless of responsibility. The divided city portrays the split in world politics and for a time it was fashionable to speak of world schizophrenia.

The tunnel is an important symbol for McEwan. As Kiernan Ryan says: 'Tunnelling down beneath the surface and burrowing across borders into forbidden territory to hijack and crack coded messages is a perfect image for what McEwan's fiction is up to' (*Ryan*, p. 59). McEwan recalls: 'You dug tunnels as a child, dangerously unsupported burrows thirty feet long. The smell of damp earth, the special quality of silence, the panic you had to control when you were down there' (*MA*, p. VIII). A tunnel (which reappears in *The Daydreamer* as a sexual symbol) can be understood as a pathway to integration between the two separated parts of the psyche and a means of healing the split. The Berlin Tunnel has the aim of treacherously robbing the adversaries of their secrets. This lends itself most easily to a Kleinian interpretation of robbery, or envious spoiling and has much in common with the cutting open of Otto's abdomen to reveal the internal organs and their contents: 'all of it shining and livid at the outrage of violated privacy, of secrets exposed' (*I*, p. 182). This is prefigured in the digging of the tunnel, which first unearths decaying corpses from a German cemetery and later cuts through the drainage field of a septic tank: 'You wouldn't believe what we were burrowing through, and it was all our very own. A putrefying corpse would have been light relief' (*I*, p. 23). Desecration of burial grounds and mutilation of the body after death are strictly taboo in most cultures and are often regarded as the ultimate insult. In Homer's time, the dismemberment of a hated enemy or refusal to bury the body was the final consummation of revenge. In the Middle Ages traitors were hanged, drawn and

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] C. Jung regards war as an eruption from the collective unconscious of the negative aspects of archetypes too long denied symbolic expression in the group rituals which are designed to maintain the balance between the two sides of mental life.

quartered.[49]

Beneath the pseudo-rational motives of cutting up Otto and putting him into the tunnel, is an expression of primitive hate and fear which is below the threshold of consciousness but capable of arousing strong collective memories. Jung holds that the grave and the sarcophagus are Evil Mother symbols: 'The negative side of the mother archetype may [be symbolised by] anything secret, hidden, dark'.[50] He also stresses: 'the characteristic relation of the mother-image to the earth, darkness, the abysmal side of the bodily man with his animal passions, and instinctual nature and to 'matter' in general'.[51] Like the earth (the motherland), the body (human or animal, male or female) is symbolic for the feminine, the material, the ever dying and eternally renewed principle, in contrast to the spirit which is masculine, unperishable and unchanging. In burial, the body is given back to Mother Earth as are bodily excrements, to undergo the secret process of putrefaction and decay by which they are reduced to their elements in readiness for use in the birth of other living forms. This takes place in darkness and the exposure of these secrets by both digging the tunnel and dismembering Otto's corpse are similar crimes against the mysteries of life and death, as well as examples of human perfidy and folly. In *The Innocent*, McEwan concentrates on exposing the body. Its surface anatomy and hidden orifices are explored, it dies, is dismembered, its inner secrets are revealed and then hidden once more. In this sense, the circle is closed and McEwan is set free to concentrate on things of the spirit in his next novel, *Black Dogs*. Ryan makes the definitive comment: 'The sheer protraction of the butchery and the sensuous absorption in gory surgical detail suggest that something tethered in the depths of his imagination has finally broken free' (*Ryan*, p. 58).

The difficulty with the metaphors in *The Innocent* is that they are powerful symbols from the collective unconscious with deep emotional significance and, when manipulated consciously as McEwan claims to do, they can arouse feelings very different from those intended by the author. The unbalance in the novel, and the consequent outcry against it, are similar to the ban on 'Solid Geometry' and spring from the same cause. In both cases McEwan uses a metaphor (a disembodied penis or a dismembered corpse) which belong to a named individual to make a general point (about male power or the partition of a country). This kind of meaning is expressed in group rites or rituals, when the universal symbols surface in projection onto sacred objects which do not immediately suggest the reality of the body parts and therefore do not arouse disgust. The cult phallus, the Lingam, Totem

[49] Here it is Leonard and not Otto who is the traitor.
[50] C. Jung, *Four Archetypes* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 16.
[51] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Poles and the image of Purusha or the dismemberment of Osiris are examples. McEwan is careful not to make this mistake again in *Black Dogs* and in *Enduring Love* he gives this very process[52] as evidence of Jed Parry's psychosis.

The Innocent can be seen to mark a division between McEwan's early and later work, his 'move abroad' not withstanding. It seems that he has come to the end of the gifts from his personal unconscious which surfaced spontaneously and clothed themselves in plot and detail, later to be overlaid with conscious thoughts and descriptions of reality but containing the important elements of the novel which only need to be elaborated and placed in appropriate settings: 'a man is standing by the side of a busy road with two heavy suitcases. They contain the dissected body of his lover's ex-husband' (*MA*, p. VII). A similar précis of the elements of *The Child in Time* occurred to McEwan during his exercises in free association:

> haunted by the memory, or perhaps the memory of a dream, of a footpath that emerges onto a bend in a country road...A figure who is me and not me...a man pulled from the wreckage of a lorry, a birth, a lost child, a man who attempts to return to his childhood, an authoritarian childcare handbook, the elusive and protean nature of time - all these seemed to rotate about this central scene... (*MA*, p. XXV)

It could be argued that as material surfaces, is expressed, to some extent worked through and integrated (if only at several removes in his writing), he finds it more difficult to use his old method of creating fiction by the mythopoetic process: 'What is it, to be thinking of a novel you might write? You put your feet up on the radiator, tilt back your chair and looking unseeingly out the window...In a state that is both passive and alert, you allow the fragments to return' (*MA*, p. VII).

Contrary to popular belief, the superego is largely unconscious. The voice of conscience is usually the voice of the 'internalised parent', proscribing and prescribing conduct. This voice is comparatively easy to silence or mitigate by rationalisations which are more or less child-like excuses. The impulses and feelings which are repressed and censored are outside awareness and there is no easy access to them. There is therefore no ready means of gauging their nature or the extent of their 'badness'. They find their way into consciousness piecemeal and can be obeyed or disobeyed, but are not subjected to a moral evaluation before they are acted upon. It is necessary for each person to work out a standard of behaviour, to replace the rules received in childhood from adults in authority. There is a temptation to espouse values opposite to the prevailing ethos in adolescent rebellion, so that the drop-out 'peace and flower power' counterculture is as unbalanced as the 'work and war' ethic of the

[52] The attempt to give something private and personal a universal significance outside any relationship with other people sharing a ritual or creed.

parent culture and stands in as much need of revision, in the light of reason. Once in place, an individual's moral conscience is accepted as part of the self and does not function by repression but by subjecting each impulse to conscious control. Decision and responsibility replace permission or prohibition. Moral dilemmas must now be faced. The effort to work out such a moral code and the resulting problems and solutions occupy a large part of McEwan's next novel. In later novels he relies much more on a deliberate crafting of his work, includes more conscious material, excludes detailed descriptions of the macabre and bizarre and seems to live less intensely through his characters. The moral code becomes the focus of conscious deliberations, once the full extent of the 'innocent' man's propensity for evil has been revealed and realised and the projections have been withdrawn.

Chapter 9 - *Black Dogs*

> My wife might have been interested in poetic truth, or spiritual truth, or her own private truth, but she didn't give a damn for *truth*, for the facts, for the kind of truth that two people could recognise independently of each other. (*BD*, p. 86)

This is the third of McEwan's full length novels. It was published in 1992 when he was 44 years old. He had been married for ten years and had two sons. He had been made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1984 and was granted an Honorary Doctorate in Literature from the University of Sussex in 1989. He was well established in a lucrative career which assured him material affluence and an enviable life-style together with respectability and recognition. It could safely be said that he had mastered the tasks of 'love and work'[1] and he found himself on the threshold of the mid-life crisis.

Stephen Lewis finds marital harmony and fatherhood in the last paragraphs of *The Child in Time*. Leonard Marnham, removed from Berlin in 1956, spends thirty years in England amid respectable domesticity, so uneventful that it is summarised in six lines in the postscript to *The Innocent*. In *Black Dogs* McEwan presents the problems he has already worked through in eleven pages of the preface, ties up some loose ends and takes up the issues clarified but not resolved in his earlier work. There is very little new material from the unconscious, while conscious ideas are elaborated at length. The protagonist of 'Last Day of Summer' or 'First Love, Last Rites', Henry from 'Disguises' or even Stephen from *The Child in Time* could, with time and experience, have grown to resemble Jeremy in their middle age. The theme of lost or rejected parents, the efforts to compensate for this deprivation by adopting parents and parenting children; the problems in intimate relationships and the evil in the world are restated and worked on, but not worked out and indeed, some are shown to be insoluble. The voice is sad and the tone pessimistic.

Black Dogs earned a mixed reception from critics, ranging from eulogies to unimpressed dismissal. Cressida Connolly feels it to be: 'closer to McEwan the man than any of his earlier books have been. It is his most thoughtful book, a novel of ideas'.[2] In sharp contrast, Adam Mars-Jones describes it as 'oddly schematic, a lifeless conflict between reductive and open ways of looking at the world'.[3] Andrew Billen calls it 'an intellectual thriller',[4] while Anthony Quinn categorises it as: 'a spiritual thriller, or maybe a spooked meditation'.[5] Zoe Heller considers it:

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[1] This was Freud's definition of psychic health and the aim of psychoanalysis with neurotic patients.
[2] Cressida Connolly, 'Prints of Darkness', *Tatler* (July 1992), p. 26.
[3] Adam Mars-Jones, 'I think I'm Right, Therefore I am' *The Observer Review* (7 Sept. 1997), p. 16.
[4] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.
[5] Quinn, 'Bitten by Other People's Parents', p. 30.

> an oddly daring book for McEwan to have written. It is not just a question of risking the frustration of those readers who anticipate his usual electric shocks: McEwan flirts pretty dangerously with honest-to-goodness banality.[6]

Most critics stress the lack of overt violence, the thoughtful mood and the important issues raised, but few can resist the temptation to draw comparisons with the gruesome set-pieces of his earlier writing.

Like Stephen and Leonard, Jeremy shares some aspects of McEwan's own life. The lower-middle class military background, reappears in Jeremy's thoughts about his father:

> the life of an infantry sergeant: enforced travel abroad, boredom alternating with severe stress, the violent deaths and terrible injuries of close friends, no privacy, no women, irregular news from home. The prospect of a life of constrained and rhythmic ordinariness must have acquired, in the slow slog eastwards through Belgium...a glow quite unknown to my parents-in-law. (*BD*, p. 136)

The hurt and vulnerable internalised child and the Oedipal theme are once more in evidence. The narrator was orphaned at the age of eight. When he was seventeen, he lived with his older sister, her husband and his three year old niece, Sally. Like Kate, in 'Last Day of Summer', Jean is a reluctant and unsatisfactory mother, absorbed in the violent and sadomasochistic relationship with Harper, amid daily quarrels, abuse of alcohol and drugs. Jeremy is a serious and studious young man, who sees his future in a University education and sometimes acts as a surrogate parent to Sally:

> Naturally, I identified with an abandoned child and so we holed up nicely from time to time in a large room overlooking the garden with her toys and my records...whenever the savagery beyond made us not want to show our faces. (*BD*, p. 9)

This self-appointed role is different from Jenny's devotion to Alice. Jeremy makes no claims to altruism: 'Looking after her was good for me. It kept me civilised and away from my own problems' (*BD*, p. 9). He has a life of his own which does not include Sally, and ensures some parenting for himself. His peers, who are well-bred, middle class boys, have reached the age when they wish to turn their backs on their backgrounds. Jeremy 'adopts' their neglected parents: 'These people treated me like a grown-up. They poured me drinks, offered me their cigarettes, asked my opinions. They were all in their forties, tolerant, relaxed, energetic' (*BD*, p. 13). Paradoxically, his friends haunt his own home, attracted by the bohemian and uninhibited atmosphere, the bizarre relationships and the physical attractiveness of his sister.

McEwan gives Jeremy his own lonely and inhibited undergraduate experience: 'I became a quietly depressed student, one of those dull types practically invisible to their contemporaries, apparently excluded by the very laws of nature from the process of making friends' (*BD*, p. 17). He

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[6] Zoe Heller, 'A Well-Bred Kind of Evil: *Black Dogs*', *The Independent on Sunday* (21 June 1992), p. 36.

soon finds parental tutors who offer him support and warmth: 'I would be invited in, I would come to life, then I would leave' (*BD*, p. 18). Jeremy leaves Oxford after four terms and continues 'to leave - addresses, jobs, friends, lovers' (*BD*, p. 17).[7] This is a clear example of the repetition compulsion, which recreates the circumstances of the original trauma of loss and maintains the chronic, unresolved grief for home. Jeremy becomes a publisher of text books and meets Jenny in Warsaw in October 1981. Mildly worrying echoes of *The Comfort of Strangers* and *The Innocent* can be detected in the fact that after their first kiss, they agree to visit the Concentration Camp in Majdanek and immediately afterwards book themselves into the Hotel Wisla in Lublin, where they spend three days. It seems as if cruelty has something very sexually exciting about it for this couple.

Jeremy marries Jenny in his mid-thirties and fathers four children realising that: 'the simplest way of restoring a lost parent was to become one yourself; that to succour the abandoned child within, there was no better way than having children of your own to love' (*BD*, p. 18). His marriage in 1982 parallels McEwan's own and the birth of Alexander, like that of William, takes place in 1983. McEwan felt fatherhood to be: 'like a home-coming...it is the air that I breathe'.[8] Jeremy's family life is presented as entirely loving and is said to provide the answer to his 'blackness, the hollow feeling of unbelonging' (*BD*, p. 10). Psychodynamic models agree that a temporary solution can be found in this way and is obviously more constructive and much less painful than the repetition compulsion. However, this apparently altruistic mechanism breaks down when the deprived internalised child can no longer be projected onto real children. There is also a danger that envy and resentment of the recipients of the parent's generosity can spoil the gift or that the children are burdened with excessive demands for gratitude or the expectation of a return of care and devotion. Healthy children are not concerned with their parents' emotional needs, occupied as they are with their own affairs. Adam Mars-Jones noted that:

> Presumably these writers will ease up on the paternity motif as their actual children grow up to be more obstreperous, less completely contained by their parents' world, not such handy screens for the projection of masculine emotion.[9]

In addition, as children grow up in time and the eldest or the youngest reaches the age at which the parent experienced his own trauma, this coping mechanism may fail. For Jeremy the age of eight, when he lost his parents, may represent a period of vulnerability. Some early deprivation of parenting can be made up in a marriage by an occasional change of roles from adult - adult to child - parent or child -

[7] McEwan himself failed the entrance exams to Oxbridge but left Sussex University with an upper second.
[8] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.
[9] Mars-Jones, *Venus Envy*, p. 34.

child. This is beautifully illustrated in *The Comfort of Strangers* when Mary says to Colin: "'You're going to have to look after *me* today"...The demand to be looked after was routine between them, and they took it in turns to respond dutifully' (*CS*, p. 44). The sad story of Thelma and Charles Darke in *The Child in Time* sounds a grim warning about excessive or unilateral recourse to this mechanism.

In spite of claims to the contrary, the deprived internalised child remains far from appeased by Jeremy's happy fatherhood. This fact is vividly demonstrated by his compulsion to intervene in a situation in a cafe in France, where parents are treating their son with punitive correction and excessive control. Jeremy feels this to be: 'an embodiment, however distorted, of my preoccupations...it represented a purging, an exorcism, in which I acted on behalf of my niece Sally, as well as for myself, and took our revenge' (*BD*, p. 124). The family in the restaurant are merely objects on which Jeremy acts out his own long repressed feelings: 'the elation driving me had nothing to do with revenge and justice' (*BD*, p. 131).

Despite early warnings, Jeremy's marriage to Jenny proves to be another example of the harmonious relationship between the 'new man' and the 'new woman'. Their closeness is comfortable, predictable and deeply satisfying, without too much excitement. Each has their own life and is free to come and go, while their reunions have the quality of peaceful homecomings. The rearing of children is central to the marriage in *The Child in Time*. In *Black Dogs*, three children do not prevent the long-term estrangement between Bernard and June, while their four children are very much in the background of the relationship between Jeremy and Jenny. The reader learns that they are there, but never comes to meet any of them.

There is a disparity between the real life experience and the fictional report of the enthusiastic journey to Germany on the occasion of the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9 1989. In the novel, Jenny returns after a ten day absence in Strasbourg and Brussels, and as she joins him in the marital bed, Jeremy shares with the reader his observations on 'how easily one gets used to sleeping alone' (*BD*, p. 67). Their drowsy reunion is interrupted by Bernard who communicates the excitement of events reported on the news and he and Jeremy order a taxi to the airport. In reality, McEwan told Edward Pilkington that: 'My wife and I jumped on the first plane out to Berlin...It seemed the obvious thing to do'.[10] The reader is powerfully reminded of Colin and Mary in *The Comfort of Strangers*, who would have had a better holiday with someone else, and of Albert, in 'Solid Geometry', telling the reader, but

[10] Pilkington, 'Berlin Mon Amour', p. 29.

not Maisie, of his plans to divorce her. In McEwan's fantasy, Jeremy chooses Bernard, his father-in-law, to share this emotive moment with him. It is also significant that his real walks in France, attributed to June and Bernard and later to Jeremy's whole family in the novel, were taken in the company of Jon Cook to whom *Black Dogs* is dedicated (his previous four books had been dedicated to Penny, his wife). Jeremy's family life has very little bearing on the story, except as a secure point of reference, an anchor for the narrator who wants to believe that his emotional problems are over. Occasional hints incline the reader to suspect that this is a temporary if lengthy escape from upheavals which threaten to return in the mid-life crisis.

Jung writes at length about the physical and psychological changes at this time, which can lead to 'all sorts of catastrophes in marriage' (*MM*, p. 124). In his middle forties, McEwan is facing illness and imminent death in the parent generation and is preparing to confront issues beyond 'love and work'. In his interview with Michael O'Donnel he spoke about his own bereavement in 1996: 'my father died...after a long illness, although he was mentally pretty alert more or less to the end'.[11] It is possible that his father was already ill when *Black Dogs* was being written and descriptions of June's peaceful, if protracted, illness and death may be a preparation for this loss. Jung holds that the mid-life crisis can be delayed by the fact that a person's parents are still alive:

> It is then as if the period of youth were unduly continued. I have seen this especially in...men whose fathers were long lived. The death of the father then has the effect of an overhurried - almost catastrophic - ripening. (*MM*, p. 121)

Jeremy, also in his forties, says of himself:

> I had just reached the age myself when one begins to differentiate between the stages of later life. There had been a time when I would have regarded it as plainly untragic to be ill and dying in your late sixties, hardly worth struggling against or complaining about. You're old, you die. Now I was beginning to see that you hang on at every stage - forty, sixty, eighty - until you were beaten, and that sixty-seven could be early in the end-game. (*BD*, p. 31)

In spite of this, death is becoming a stark reality, forcibly brought into focus by the need to 'attend funerals regularly' (*BD*, p. 63).

In this novel, the Oedipal theme is dealt with by killing off both parents before Jeremy's adolescence. This is the cause of much rootlessness and sadness but has the advantage of leaving him free to choose several pairs of substitute parents who are 'educated and well off' (*BD*, p. 11) and middle-aged. These pseudo-parents can be picked up and dropped, have neither power nor authority over him but can be used at will, within broad limits, to meet his needs without making demands or

[11] O'Donnel, 'Utopia and Other Destinations', transcript. In a recent interview for 'Desert Island Discs', McEwan revealed that his father had died of emphysema, after a life-time of heavy smoking.

putting him under pressure from their expectations. All are useful models of the middle-class life-style to which Jeremy aspires. His parents-in-law are married and love each other, but are separated by a chasm of disagreement, which allows him to have separate, loving, filial relationships with each and an illusory sense of control by acting as a channel of communication between them. He gains access to private information about their sex life, discovers that Bernard 'took a small penis size' (*BD*, p. 32) and secures a detailed description of his wife's conception from each of her parents in turn. The opportunity to project jealousy and resentment of closeness into all their children, including his own wife, is an added bonus: 'My tendency to play the cuckoo caused some unhappiness to Jenny and her brothers for which I apologise' (*BD*, p. 20). This is much more acceptable than the gloating of the protagonist in 'Homemade' but springs from the same impulse. Peter Kemp appreciates McEwan's lighter touch: 'Childhood vulnerability is again to the fore. But, instead of provoking mere gruesome frissons, it's now seen as unleashing desolation that could last a lifetime'.[12] The creation of June and Bernard gives McEwan an opportunity to revisit once more the historical time of his youthful parents.

June and Bernard met in 1944 and married in 1946. The traditional values of the parent generation, with their liberal use of the mechanisms of splitting and projection which requires an enemy and their hot and cold wars fought to eradicate the evil that lives in themselves, are obviously wrong. It became necessary to create a new creed. The two contenders in this novel are the extreme polarities of the idea, intellect and science versus matter, intuition and revelation. In politics, this translates into a concern for the masses of mankind versus the individual human being. McEwan embodies these opposites in the attitudes of Bernard and June and seems to return by this means to his early opposition of male and female consciousness. The purity of the dialectic is somewhat marred when, in spite of the high-brow tone of the argument, their differences are revealed as a power game:

> they could have phoned or seen each other any time they wanted. Like young, absurdly proud lovers, they restrained themselves, believing that the one who called was revealing a weakness, a contemptible emotional dependency. (*BD*, p. 49)

Despite his love for June, Jeremy is quick to criticise her bitterness and resentment against Bernard, but whenever Bernard attacks her position he springs to her defence. The account is written very carefully to emphasise the lack of consistency in the memories and feelings of both contestants. In making a list of June's certainties, Bernard includes: 'unicorns, wood spirits, angels, mediums, self-healing, the collective unconscious, the "Christ within us"' (*BD*, p. 46). McEwan seems to be inviting projective

[12] Kemp, 'Hounding the Innocent', p. 6.

identification from the reader to gain support for June because a separate argument can be made for the concrete, symbolic or spiritual reality of any one of these ideas, whilst listing them in this way is pejorative and contemptuous of these non-rational concepts. He informs the reader that:

> June published three books in her life-time. In the mid-fifties, *Mystical Grace: Selected Writings of St. Teresa of Avila*. A decade later, *Wild Flowers of Languedoc*, and two years after that, a short practical pamphlet, *Ten Meditations*. (*BD*, p. 172)[13]

This helps to establish her status as a serious thinker. The validity of self-healing is demonstrated when she falls ill. A diagnosis of rapidly progressive and fatal illness is made but her practice of meditation and alternative medicine ensures that: 'Five years on, June was still alive...She was...taking as much time over dying as the rest of us' (*BD*, p. 30). Bernard, who represents the rational pole of the continuum, was a committed member of the communist party until 1956, when the USSR's ruthless suppression of the Hungarian rising made this stance untenable. He then joined the Labour Party. Both Bernard and June are aspects of McEwan's own personality illustrating his attraction to science, his temporary 'dropping out' in his twenties, his marriage to Penny (astrologer and healer) and his efforts to understand politics and modern physics:

> Rationalist and mystic, commissar and yogi, joiner and abstainer, scientist and intuitionist, Bernard and June are the extremities, the twin poles along whose slippery axis my own unbelief slithers and never comes to rest. (*BD*, p. 19)

Jeremy's inability to wholeheartedly espouse either one or other world view is starkly expressed in the following:

> In Bernard's company, I always sensed there was an element missing from his account of the world, and that it was June who held the key. The assurance of his scepticism, his invincible atheism made me wary; it was too arrogant, too much was closed off, too much denied. In conversations with June, I found myself thinking like Bernard; I felt stifled by her expressions of faith, and bothered by the unstated assumption of all believers that they are good because they believe what they believe, that faith is virtue, and, by extension, unbelief is unworthy or, at best, pitiable. (*BD*, p. 20)

During their long life of married separation, Bernard and June are unable to communicate. Theirs is the dialogue designated by Jung as the 'anima/animus quarrel'. They spend their time and energy in futile attempts to prove each other wrong: 'Bernard thinks I'm a silly occultist, and I think he's a fish-eyed commissar' (*BD*, p. 52). Neither Jeremy nor the reader can agree with this assessment of their respective personalities and yet the split between them is so wide that they need to keep the English Channel between them for most of their lives. In a novel which celebrates the fall of the Berlin Wall and a spontaneous mass movement towards unification and integration, this intelligent, sensitive and

[13] Penny Allen published a book of twelve meditations in 1998.

educated pair of ardent lovers never come together after the initial breakdown of their relationship. Their differences are deeply rooted and McEwan's detailed exploration of the issues involved here, raises questions which lend themselves most readily to a Jungian interpretation.

In order to depict the irreconcilable division in his own psyche, McEwan gives Bernard and June the youthful convictions which he had chosen for himself to replace the received wisdom of the parent generation. He then follows the changes which the process of individuation produces in their inner and outer lives. He never joined any political organisation for fear that this might compromise his artistic integrity but he made it clear that in the first half of his adult life he sympathised with the political left, supported unilateral disarmament and concerned himself with the Women's Movement. Since his 'move abroad', there has been a gradual drifting away from any hard-line general principles towards an acceptance of the primacy of the goal of success in his career and, until the writing of *Black Dogs* (when cracks were beginning to show in his marriage) of wholehearted commitment to family life.

Black Dogs deals in depth with the transitional phase of middle life. Unlike most analysts, Jung takes a special interest in the second half of life and has developed a sophisticated system of ideas which is used here to shed light on some of the more obscure aspects of this unusual novel. He holds that the task of the first half of life: 'consists in restricting ourselves to the attainable' (*MM*, p. 119). The persona, which mediates between the ego and the outside world, is energetically developed together with the primary and, to a lesser extent the secondary function, while the inferior functions remain in the unconscious. The unacceptable aspects of the personality are repressed and form the personal shadow. This becomes associated with the collective shadow, which exists in the collective unconscious and represents evil in mankind as a whole. The contrasexual images, the anima in men and the animus in women, are similarly formed by the repression of personal tendencies which are regarded by the culture as proper to the opposite sex. These attach themselves to the appropriate archetypes and form autonomous complexes in the unconscious. McEwan would probably agree with Jung that:

> If the figure of the soul image, the contrasexual element in our own psyche, has sunk so deep into the unconscious, if accordingly it plays so crucial and often disastrous a role in Western man, our patriarchally oriented culture is largely to blame.[14]

These 'soul images' can be experienced in dreams and fantasies and they can affect the ego by producing irrational moods in men or illogical opinions in women. Most commonly however, they are

[14] Jolande Jacobi, *The Psychology of C. G. Jung* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1942), p. 117.

projected onto a member of the opposite sex in the process of falling in love. The partner who carries the soul image for the individual becomes, in effect, their other half and the attraction of the opposites can lead to union at the physical, emotional and spiritual level.

For McEwan, things could not have been quite so simple. From what is known about him, he seems to have an introverted temperament and to possess the typically masculine distribution of functions with thinking as the primary and sensation as the secondary orientation, which would leave feeling and intuition as his least differentiated functions. This personality organisation accurately describes Bernard (and Joe in *Enduring Love*). However, McEwan's unremitting effort to keep in touch with his inner life, with the help of psychedelic drugs, the practice of meditation, active imagination, and especially his heavy reliance on fantasy to help him with his work, has ensured that he made the acquaintance of his personal and possibly even the collective shadow and of his anima much earlier than other men. The anima or animus mediate between the ego and the inner world so that McEwan's need to rely on the anima for inspiration may have led him to develop a close identification with the feminine and creative side of his personality. Jung insists that fantasy is 'the maternally creative side of the masculine spirit' (*MM*, p. 76). This close association with 'the feminine', together with the parallels between the experience of writing and giving birth: inspiration-fertilisation; incubation-gestation; publication-parturition, may explain the categorisation by some critics of *The Child in Time* as a Couvade syndrome. His own experience may have led McEwan to organise June's personality on similar lines. At first she is identified with her animus and embraces the masculine values of intellect, action and commitment to an extroverted task. Her femininity is repressed and her relationship with Bernard depends on a physical complementarity and an emotional and spiritual identification. This may look like exceptional compatibility and enviable closeness but is in fact more like a homosexual friendship with an option of heterosexual intimacy.[15] Their brittle solidarity is shattered when June realises she is pregnant and finds herself entertaining guilty fantasies of home-making and baby-care, which feel like a betrayal of her ideals and are certainly experienced by Bernard in that way. Her animus, now separated from her essential feminine self, is projected onto Bernard. This more conventional and common situation follows the usual pattern of gradual disenchantment and the need to withdraw the idealised image from him. Bernard, on the other hand, who imagined that he

[15] Colin and Mary share a similar relationship: 'They often said they found it hard to remember that the other was a separate person. When they looked at each other they looked into a misted mirror', *The Comfort of Strangers* p 18. They are both feminine, while Bernard and June both start off as masculine.

had married his 'soul mate', now finds that he has 'married his own worst weakness'.[16] Out of touch with his inner world, he now projects onto June the repudiated and denied attributes of his anima.

In the absence of her early pregnancy, June and Bernard's marriage could have followed McEwan's frequently described pattern of marriages where the woman is like a man or the man like a woman and the partners are like-minded, friendly and compatible to the extent that they have nothing to quarrel about. Jung states that: 'in the long run nothing is more unbearable than a tepid harmony in personal relations brought about by withholding emotion. The repressed emotions are often of a kind we wish to keep secret' (*MM*, p. 39). When the essential self is a secret, not only from 'the other' but also from oneself, an inauthentic closeness must replace genuine intimacy and these cosy couples go sleepily to bed, planning a trip with someone interesting or remembering how easy it is to sleep alone. Even so, this is more viable and comfortable than the endless and passionate quarrel in which each partner attributes his or her own faults and shortcomings to the other or bitterly attacks them for showing any sign of their true self. While the anima and animus are unconscious and projected, the disappointment in love fuels the conflict, as happens between June and Bernard. If both partners can value the other's authentic individuality, a strong and genuine love and respect can develop. This withdrawal of the projection of the shadow and contrasexual archetype is the task of Individuation:[17]

> in the second half of life, [one] no longer needs to educate [the] conscious will but...must learn to experience his own inner being. Social usefulness is no longer an aim for him although he does not question its desirability. (*MM*, p. 81)

This change usually occurs gradually although, in rare instances, it can be catastrophic or unduly delayed. Bernard experiences a change in his positive attitude to the war as a legitimate expression of the masculine spirit, seen as:

> the details of his work, of doing it well, and his widest view [which] had been of war aims, of winning, of statistical deaths, statistical destruction, and of post-war reconstruction. For the first time he sensed the scale of the catastrophe in terms of feeling... (*BD*, p. 165)

This comes about when he sees a young woman, grieving at a war memorial for her dead men-folk and he is:

> struck by the recently concluded war not as a historical, geopolitical fact but as a multiplicity, a near-infinity of private sorrows, as a boundless grief minutely subdivided without diminishment among individuals who covered the continent like dust, like spores. (*BD*, p. 164)

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[16] C. Jung deals with this at length in 'The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious (1928)', *Collected Works*, vol. 7 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), p. 297.

[17] While both the shadow and the contrasexual archetypes are unconscious, they frequently contaminate each other so that men think that women are weak and untrustworthy and women feel that men are brutes.

This can be understood as an insight granted him by the anima, represented by the grieving woman.

As well as Bernard's political confusion, there is Jeremy's experience during his visit to Poland in October 1981. This is the period before Solidarity was made illegal by Jaruzelski:

> My own politics were thrown into turmoil. Poles whom I instinctively admired urged me to support the very Western politicians I most distrusted, and a language of anti-communism - which until then I had associated with cranky ideologues of the right - came easily to everyone here where Communism was a network of privileges and corruption and licensed violence, a mental disease, an array of laughable, improbable lies and, most tangibly, the instrument of occupation by a foreign power. (*BD*, p. 107)

Jeremy could be speaking for McEwan when he makes an insightful statement of his basic emotional/spiritual position:

> It was not that I was a doubter, or that I had armed myself with the useful scepticism of a rational curiosity, or that I saw all arguments from all sides; there was simply no good cause, no enduring principle, no fundamental idea with which I could identify, no transcendent entity whose existence I could truthfully, passionately or quietly assert. (*BD*, p. 18)

In a speech in Oxford Town Hall in support of Charter 88,[18] McEwan said:

> my scepticism protects my artistic licence. And yet...I have my passions and opinions...and I have often felt torn: I have marched and talked for CND but I never joined it. I have voted Labour and even canvassed in some general elections but I have never joined the party....I have voted and spoken for the Greens but I never joined.[19]

McEwan's reluctance to identify himself with ideologies makes the search for truth into a serious quest for him He fits into the category of people whom Jung describes as:

> exceptionally able, courageous and upright persons who have repudiated our traditional truths for honest and decent reasons...Either they cannot reconcile the scientific and the religious outlooks or Christian tenets have lost their authority and their psychological justification...they cannot compel themselves to believe, however happy they may deem the man who has a belief. (*MM*, p. 268)

Once June is dead, Bernard continues the dialogue with Jeremy and becomes obsessed with the idea that if June's spirit survives, she will get in touch with him. In typically McEwanesque fashion, Bernard and the reader are offered descriptions of ambiguous events which do not convince an unbeliever but, like the paranormal happening in *The Child in Time*, 'almost connect up...Almost' (*CT*, p. 177). There is Jenny's sixth finger, Bernard's rescue at Checkpoint Charlie by a young girl who reminds him of June in her youth, and later, Jeremy's own experience of something that could have been June's warning about the scorpion in her house in France. When Bernard too dies, Jeremy continues the

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[18] Charter 88 demands a written constitution and freedom of information together with other human rights and, like the June 20th group which McEwan joined in 1988, does not presuppose any commitment to a political party or religion. The latter was an informal gathering of friends started by Harold Pinter and John Mortimer. McEwan, Germaine Greer, Salman Rushdie, Melvin Bragg and David Hare were among a membership of twenty writers and journalists. This group broke up as spontaneously as it had come together.

[19] Ian McEwan, 'A New Licence for Liberty', *The Guardian* (30 April 1990), p. 19.

dialogue inside himself but never reaches any conclusions. His only credo is summarised thus: 'I would be false to my own experience if I did not declare my belief in the possibility of love transforming and redeeming a life' (*BD*, p. 20). Alan Franks feels that *Black Dogs* is:

> a fair index of McEwan's own position caught as he is somewhere between the old but embattled certainties of his leftish politics and...taking very seriously the negotiating position of the spirit...There is also the crucial matter of Penny, his wife. Nobody is suggesting she is June but...[20]

Andrew Billen reports: 'McEwan adds that the book is also a dramatisation of his own uncomfortable agnosticism and an extension of discussions he has with his wife about belief and scepticism'.[21] June's truth may have much in common with Penny Allen's credo, expressed in language calculated to irritate anyone who is not a believer in her mystical symbolism. For example:

> Sun and Moon can be seen as the balance of light and dark within us, providing us with an inner and outer sense of time, Mercury gives us our spinal fluid and nervous system, enabling the body to respond to thought, Venus provides us with flesh and blood, and Mars with the cellular structure.[22]

This could, no doubt, be reformulated and reworded to make sense and even illuminate some mysteries, but as it stands, it may well cause many readers to 'wince for those who speak this way' (*BD*, p. 60). The recording of dialogues between Jeremy and Bernard, or June, brings to mind the image of Albert who writes in his diary 'what Maisie has said to me and what I have said to Maisie' (*FLLR*, p. 10): 'The novel compresses the diverse conflicts organising his work to date into a single, searching debate' (*Ryan*, p. 62). Most significantly: 'The emptiness of the fatal gorge where the beasts emerge mirrors the self-confessed void, the emotional and moral vacuum within Jeremy himself' (*Ryan*, p. 67).

> The symbolism of the black dogs is carefully explained in the book itself. Bernard tells Jeremy:
>
> I was the one who told her about Churchill's black dog. You remember? The name he gave to the depressions he used to get from time to time. I think he pinched the expression from Samuel Johnson. So June's idea was that if one dog was a personal depression, two dogs were a kind of cultural depression, civilisation's worst moods. Not bad really. (*BD*, p. 104)

McEwan describes a walking holiday in France, when he ran into a pair of black dogs:

> They were so big and so enormous, so out of place in the terrain, that we left the path and armed ourselves with rocks and circled round them. When they had gone, I started thinking how quickly one transforms such things into a symbol.[23]

Billen offers some examples of mythical dogs:

> the black dog slumbering at the foot of Durer's 'Melancholia', Horace's reference to black dogs or Johnson and the black dog of his depression, or even Churchill's. The mythic

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[20] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.
[21] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.
[22] Allen, *Face of the Deep*, p. 102.
[23] Billen, 'A Goodbye to Gore', p. 29.

qualities of these animals predate the myths.[24]

The black dogs are a powerful symbol from the universal unconscious. Black usually denotes death, the shadow or the evil side of the psyche and dogs or other dangerous animals stand for man's animal nature, his instincts and uncivilised impulses. In addition to the dogs mentioned by McEwan and Billen there is a long history of the use of this symbol. Dogs are associated with Artemis who is an anima figure, generally hostile to men, who sometimes sets her dogs on them. Dogs devour the unburied remains of defeated Greek Heroes. Cerberus, the three headed black dog is a guardian of Hades. Satan is often referred to as 'the Hound of Hell'. Jezebel was eaten by dogs and Hecuba was turned into a dog - Cynossema (dog's monument) on the Hellespont is believed to be her tomb. Most pertinent is the Egyptian god Set, who has the body of a man and the head of a dog. Set murdered and dismembered his twin brother Osiris by cutting him up into fourteen pieces and buried each piece in a different place in order to prevent his resurrection. All these dogs bite, tear, dismember and are the objects of terror and the instruments of death and damnation.

June had been living through her animus and her repressed femininity had become connected with the shadow and the self. A complex image representing these unconscious elements is constellated by the stress of the meeting with the dogs, soon after her pregnancy has evoked an urgent need to reclaim her femininity from the unconscious. Only the dark, negative side of the archetypes is experienced in projection on the black dogs so that she is convinced that she had come face to face with pure evil. This evil is later shown to be connected with the Nazi atrocities and with war and destruction, so that the dogs become a new symbol which is personal to June but can be shared with her family and with the reader without diminishment or trivialisation.

Jung believes that new religious symbols are created by individuals in this way and are taken up by the group who need not understand them intellectually but respond to them intuitively. The black dogs represent all three archetypes in their negative aspects: shadow; animus; and Self. This is what allows them to symbolise the incarnation of evil. This image is very complex. Animus figures are often multiple but usually male; the Self is often represented by a male and female figure who are obviously mates. Jung once described the sudden experience of individuation as being 'bitten by animals',[25] which must be confronted and not escaped from. He also holds that extremes are closer to one another than they are to any other point on the continuum and each is approximately equidistant

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[24] *Ibid.*
[25] Jacobi, *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*, p. 127.

from the middle. He uses this idea to explain the paradoxical change from one extreme to the other, or 'enantiodromia'. Enantiodromia seems to be the process by which June's experience of pure evil, in the shape of the black dogs, is immediately followed by a personal revelation of God, the spontaneous realisation of the positive aspect of the central archetype of the Self experienced as a living entity in the inner world. Evil can not be destroyed. It is balanced by, but not negated by, the good. It recedes and returns again and again. There is no doubt that June's meeting with the black dogs is the centre around which the whole novel revolves and which connects the disparate elements and gives them meaning. It is a completely personal spiritual experience which changes the direction and colours the whole of the rest of June's long life. Through it, June feels that she has 'come to God'. The power of this realisation rests in the suddenness and depth of the crisis, which came about in June's youth. Individuation usually comes gradually and is not complete until old age and only in exceptional individuals. Despite her dedication, June never achieves this goal, outlined by Jung as:

> The transition from morning to afternoon [of life], means a revaluation of the earlier values. There comes the urgent need to appreciate the value of the opposite of our former ideals, to perceive the error in our former convictions...It is...a fundamental mistake to imagine that when we see the non-value in a value or the untruth in a truth, the value or the truth ceases to exist. It has only become relative. Everything human is relative, because everything rests on the inner polarity....The point is not conversion into the opposite but conservation of precious values together with recognition of their opposites.[26]

Since the outcry against the dismemberment scene in *The Innocent*, McEwan has learnt a great deal about the control of audience response. Zoe Heller comments on his determination to avoid 'flashy-slashy set-pieces' and illustrates this with: 'the way in which the book flags its seminal horror scene in the title...and then offers it up in a précis within the first five pages'.[27] The scene which could have unbalanced this rather cool and thoughtful narrative is the bestiality and the rape. However, McEwan is careful to suggest this in the vaguest possible terms. He sets it in the historical past, attributes it to the work of the Gestapo and has the story mentioned by the Maire against the protests of Mme Auriac so that the reader is not sure if this is a fact, let alone a palpable reality like the dismemberment of Otto. Anthony Quinn is impressed with the change in McEwan's style: 'he deploys a sinister allusiveness, whereby "June's black dogs" gather ominously in significance even as they remain shrouded in vagueness'.[28] This story contains powerful reminders that gothic horrors are within each and every person and circumstances can bring them out. Clever, civilised Jeremy needs to be restrained

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[26] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[27] Heller, 'A Well-Bred Kind of Evil: *Black Dogs*', p. 36.
[28] Quinn, 'Bitten by Other People's Parents', p. 30.

from kicking a total stranger to death; spiritual, mystical June finds it impossible to forgive herself or Bernard in spite of their love; logical, rational Bernard looks at young girls to find a reincarnation of June but can not accept it when she seems to arrive. The only certainty in this whole book seems to be Jeremy's love for his wife and family and this seems forlorn and inadequate as potential hope for the redemption of mankind from evil. It is presented like a sentimental tune whistled by an anxious person into a tempest.

The unification of Germany is shown as potentially dangerous, with a resurgence of red flags and swastikas at the very time and place in history where the great breakthrough is being made. The hints of anti-Semitism in Poland lend powerful support to the idea of the ebb and flow of the tide of evil which moves regularly over Europe and the rest of the world. When Jeremy and Jenny visit Majdanek, he recalls:

> We stopped outside the main entrance to read a sign which announced that so many hundreds of thousands of Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, French, British and Americans had died here...'No mention of the Jews. See? It still goes on. And it's official'. (*BD*, p. 109)

This is a good point, well made, but untrue. McEwan, who is renowned for his meticulous research, has misquoted the sign, which in English and Polish reads: 'Some 235000 prisoners died in the camp, among them 48% Jews, 31% Poles, 16% Nationals of the Soviet Union, 5% from other nations'.[29] This off-hand misrepresentation seems a dubious means to make an important point. There is a certain irony in the fact that *Black Dogs* has been translated into Polish.[30] This error is bound to be noticed and may cause offence to Polish readers.

June and Bernard's relationship: 'becomes an obvious representation of post-war Europe, a combination of love and hate, politics and sentiment, and their marriage, appropriately, spans the Cold War, ending only when June dies in 1987' (*Slay*, p. 142). McEwan comments that within six weeks of completing *Black Dogs* 'the catastrophe of Yugoslavia began...If you asked me where the black dogs went, it's exactly there'.[31]

Black Dogs seems to represent the high point of McEwan's spiritual development and his later work abandons (possibly temporarily) the task of integration of the opposites, which he himself once believed to be the key to human progress in the next millennium.

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[29] A photograph of the sign outside the main entrance was supplied by Halina Wolek, ul. Krasinskiego 6, m. 126, 20 - 709, Lublin, Poland, in a personal communication. Information pamphlets, in several languages (including English), are also available from Majdanek.
[30] Ian McEwan, Marek Fedyszak (trans.), *Czarne Psy* (Poland: Bip, 1998).
[31] William Grimes, 'Rustic Calm Inspires McEwan Tale of Evil', *New York Times* (18 Nov. 1992), p. 25.

Chapter 10 - *Enduring Love*

> [McEwan] keeps us guessing about whether he intended for the Enduring of his title to possess the sweetness of an adjective or the burden of a verb.[1]

The ambiguities of the novel's title, which Phil Baker describes as 'a sinister pun',[2] are significant. *Enduring Love* was first published in 1997. It is McEwan's fourth novel. His reputation was now safely established:

> Ian McEwan is widely considered one of Britain's greatest living writers. With the publication of his most recent novel, the brilliant and immensely satisfying *Enduring Love*, he has raised the bar for his contemporaries and produced one of this year's finest pieces of fiction.[3]

Andrea Holland[4] and Natasha Walter[5] regard it as McEwan's finest novel to date, while Rosmary Dinnage judges it: 'his best...since *The Child in Time*'.[6] One of the five judges for the Booker prize, Dan Jacobson, told Dan Glaister that: 'The exclusion of McEwan was a damn close run thing'.[7] It was shortlisted for the Whitbread Award. The judges for this prize describe it as: 'a great and powerful book with a gripping beginning'.[8] This suggests that they may not have been so impressed with the rest of it. Jan Dalley states frankly that the 'overlay of science' used to illustrate 'moral dilemmas' and the 'thoughts on the human condition' could have been done without, while the appendices make 'a mildly disappointing' ending.[9] R. A. Page on the other hand particularly admires 'the fine balance...between the narrator's personal experiences and his scientific understanding of them'.[10] Elizabeth Judd comments: '*Enduring Love* sometimes soars to such heights that I'm disappointed it didn't, in the end, reach greatness'.[11]

McEwan has found a place on the internet and readers from all parts of the USA, France, Australia, Germany, Spain, Norway and Canada have contributed copious comments. A reader from Indiana tells the world: 'I didn't like the narrator, didn't care what happened and found all the characters to be boring'.[12] At the opposite extreme, there is Natasha Walter's feeling: 'we care for Joe's future as

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[1] Margaria Fichtner, *'Enduring Love' - a Plummet to Earth Gets a Frenzy of Obsession, Distrust: Miami Herald* (http://www.books.realcities.com/reviews/0223/enduring.html).
[2] Phil Baker, *'Enduring Love'*, *Sunday Times* (16 Nov. 1997), p. 4.
[3] Anon, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: BoldType* (http://www.bookwire.com/boldtype/imcewan/read.article).
[4] Andrea Holland, *'Enduring Love': Rain Taxi #9* (http://www.raintaxi.com/mcewan.html).
[5] Walter, 'Looks Like a Teacher. Writes Like a Demon', p. 2.
[6] Rosemary Dinnage, *So Alert with Love: The New York Review of Books* (http://www.nybooks.com/nyrev/WWWarchdisplay.cgi?1998040932R@p1).
[7] Dan Glaister, 'McEwan Novel a Write-Off for Booker Judges', *The Guardian* (16 Sept. 1997), p. 3.
[8] Dalya Alberge, 'McEwan in Final Round of the Whitbread Award', *The Times* (11 Nov. 1997), p. 14.
[9] Dalley, 'Blowing in the Wind', p. 22.
[10] R.A. Page, 'The Appliance of Science', *The Guardian* (19 Dec. 1997), p. 23
[11] Elizabeth Judd, *'Enduring Love': Salon* (http://www.salon1999.com/books/sneaks/1998 02/20review.html).
[12] Anon, *Featured Author: Ian McEwan: American Book Center* (http://www.abc.nl/basement/hansj/text/mcewan.html).

we have never cared for a McEwan protagonist before'.[13] Most of the internet ratings are between 8 and 10 and most of the opinions are thoughtful, eloquent and positive. Robert McCrum states that it is 'a much better book' than *Black Dogs*.[14] Adam Mars-Jones, who does not like *Black Dogs*, also thinks it is 'much the better book, despite its inability fully to dramatise its themes'.[15] Deirdre Donahue describes it as: 'a compelling examination of how life can change in a tragic instant'.[16] Cressida Connolly had been enraptured with *Black Dogs* claiming: 'everyone should read this book: it ought to be available, subsidised, on the National Health, like vitamin drops'.[17] Yet she was so disappointed with *Enduring Love* that she calls for 'an immediate, worldwide moratorium on novelists reading works of science'.[18] This is unlikely to come about, if only because McEwan was the chairman of 'The Rhone-Poulenc science writing prize' for 1998. In the prize announcement on June 9th, 1998, he spoke at length about the concept of 'co-evolution' and awarded the prize to the biologist Jared Diamond for his book *Guns, Germs and Steel* which 'shows how biological thought can enhance the explanatory reach of history'.[19]

In interviews, McEwan reveals that he had struggled with the shape of the novel and clearly intended to write a thriller: 'I came across a journal entry I wrote about six months before I began working on *Enduring Love*...it said "write a first chapter that would be the equivalent of a highly addictive drug."'[20] Almost all reviewers, notably Brian Morton,[21] Peter Kemp[22] and Jan Dalley,[23] devote a disproportionate amount of space and praise to the first chapter.

McEwan told Natasha Walter that he had wanted to write a detective novel because it is 'the fictional form most about the rational'.[24] He began with the scene where Joe buys a gun from some hippies. He then thought out a character for Joe and dropped the idea of the detective because 'he didn't talk like one....Then I heard about the balloon accident. And then I read about De Clerambault's syndrome'.[25] He informed Fanny Blake:

> Our literature is full of examples where it's suggested that people should have followed their heart or listened to their feelings. The rational is seen as cold, unfeeling, inhuman - I'm

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[13] Walter, 'Looks Like a Teacher. Writes Like a Demon', p. 2.
[14] Robert McCrum, 'Book of the Week - *Enduring Love*', *The Observer* (14 Sept. 1997), p 74.
[15] Mars-Jones, 'I Think I'm Right, Therefore I Am', p. 16.
[16] Deirdre Donahue, *McEwan Conveys Power and Pathos of 'Enduring Love': USA Today* (http://www.usatoday.com/life/enter/books/b226.htm).
[17] Connolly, 'Prints of Darkness', p. 26.
[18] Cressida Connolly, *Over Fished Waters: Literary Review* (http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~litrev/199709/connolly.html).
[19] Ian McEwan, 'Wonderful Worlds', *The Guardian* (10 June 1998), p. 16.
[20] Eric Schoeck, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Capitola Book Cafe* (http://www.capitolabookcafe.com//andrea/mcewan.html).
[21] Brian Morton, 'Love in a Balloon', *The Financial Times* (6 Sept. 1997), p. 5.
[22] Peter Kemp, 'Taking Flight', *Sunday Times* (7 Sept. 1997), 24 – 25.
[23] Dalley, 'Blowing in the Wind', p. 22.
[24] Walter, 'Looks Like a Teacher. Writes Like a Demon', p. 2.
[25] *Ibid.*

saying that we actually depend on rationality.[26]

While critics continue to make references to the gothic excesses in his earlier writing, there is comparatively little emphasis on his 'usual shock-in-trade' in *Enduring Love*.[27] In spite of the fact that the reader is offered vivid descriptions of unsuccessful attempts at assassination, kidnapping, murder and suicide, much of the critical interest is focused on the sophisticated nuances of the relationship between Joe, Jed and Clarissa.

Andrea Holland notes that 'the characters are complex, interesting people with believable lives in a bizarre situation'.[28] Leonard Chang states:

> Joe's relationship with his...wife...transcends the mechanics of the main plot, because even though their marriage is jeopardised by Parry's obsessions, McEwan shows their problems as arising from murkier depths.[29]

Peter Kemp, who supposes the difficulties between Stephen and Julie, in *The Child in Time*, and Bernard and June, in *Black Dogs*, to be based on gender differences, makes a similar assumption about the marital problems between Clarissa and Joe. Here he discerns a 'near-manic male desire for action...contrasted with a less aggressive and less blatantly assertive female response to crisis'.[30] Tyler Steward writes: 'Ian McEwan reassembles the elements of the unrequited love story in a way both haunting and wholly unexpected'.[31] The critic writing for *The Star* also stresses 'the lack of communication among people, and in particular between the sexes'.[32] He insists that the homoerotic element 'is not gay-bashing' and describes the appendix and glossary as 'a wry touch'.[33] Michele Roberts believes that 'Jed represses his homosexual urges and Joe denies that he has any'.[34] Harvey Porlock registers surprise at the attitude of Philip Hensher, whom he quotes as saying: 'I do think that a book which so immediately identifies homosexual desire as psychotic is unhelpful at best, an unattractive yielding to unthinking prejudice at worst'.[35]

McEwan was forty-nine when he finished *Enduring Love*. His father had died a year before. His marriage had broken down:

> The celebrated author and his wife appeared to lead a blissful life at their Oxford home, raising four children during their 21 years together (14 as man and wife), but in 1995 Ms

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[26] Fanny Blake, '*Enduring Love*', *You* (1 Nov. 1998), p. 71.
[27] Franks, 'McEwan's Best Bitterness', p. 4.
[28] Andrea Holland, *'Enduring Love': Rain Taxi #9* (http://www.raintaxi.com/mcewan.html).
[29] Leonard Chang, *Up, Up and Away: Guardian Lit.* (http://www.sfbg.com/lit/reviews/up.html).
[30] Kemp, 'Taking Flight', p. 24.
[31] Tyler Steward, *McEwan Tells Tale of 'Unrequited Love': The Daily Iowan* (http://www.uiowa.edu/~dlyiowan/issue/v130/i39/stories/B0801A.html).
[32] Anon, *Ian McEwan's Writing – 'Enduring Love': The Star: Independent On-Line* (http://www2.inc.co.za/archives/scpttodec1977/9712/13/bkl.html).
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] Roberts, 'Split Personalities: *Enduring Love* by Ian McEwan', p. 6.
[35] Harvey Porlock, 'It's McEwan's Critics Who Are Really Sinister', *Sunday Times* (14 Sept. 1997), p. 2.

Allen petitioned for divorce on the grounds of McEwan's unreasonable behaviour.[36] *Enduring Love* is dedicated to 'Annalena': 'His bride is Annalena McAfee, a red-haired arts journalist',[37] whom he wed in secret. The book deals with marital disharmony, precipitated, but by no means caused, by the incursion of a third person. There is a sadness and a sense of regret about the forthcoming changes, which McEwan shares not only with Joe Rose but also with some of the minor characters in this novel: 'What idiocy, to be racing into this story and its labyrinths, sprinting away from our happiness among the fresh spring grasses by the oak' (*EL*, p. 1). Clarissa's brother, Luke: 'was leaving his kindly beautiful wife and bonny twin daughters and Queen Anne house in Islington to live with an actress he had met three months before' (*EL*, p. 52). Mrs Logan's life-long devotion to her husband is posthumously shattered by her suspicion that his act of selfless courage was nothing other than the wish of a forty-two-year-old man to show off to a girl: 'She was watching him, and he knew she was watching, and he had to show her, he had to prove himself to her' (*EL*, p. 122). As it turns out, the affair was between a much older lecturer and his student. In a recent interview, McEwan 'was as coy as a teenager who had eloped to Gretna Green'[38] and describes his new wife as 'a lovely girl'.[39] This strikes a worrying note when the reader finds Molly in *Amsterdam* also referred to as 'a lovely girl' (*A*, p. 7). According to Jung:

> Woman always stands just where the man's shadow falls, so that he is only too liable to confuse the two. Then, when he tries to repair this misunderstanding, he overvalues her and believes her the most desirable thing in the world.[40]

In middle life, stable and loyal husbands and fathers are often tempted to fall in love with much younger women who embody their anima and exercise a fatal fascination. These women seem to offer the hope of painless and easy fulfilment of the urge towards completeness through a total physical, emotional and spiritual union with the soul image. Heartache and disappointment are not infrequent if these impulses are acted on and wife, children, home and reputation abandoned. Many find that the tasks of youth are even more difficult at fifty than they were at twenty. Animas have a fatal tendency to turn out to be average young women who often want a conventional home and babies when the man's children are already adolescent. Joe and Clarissa separate and their reunion is relegated to a casual mention in the epilogue: 'While in this case R and M were reconciled and later successfully adopted a child, other victims have had to divorce' (*EL*, p. 242). There is no real resolution to their underlying

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[36] P.H.S., 'New Penny', *The Times* (18 Sept. 1997), p. 22.
[37] P.H.S., 'Second Love', *The Times* (12 Sept. 1997), p. 18.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Jung, *Psychological Reflections*, p. 109.

difficulties and their reconciliation is not convincing.

It is part of the mid-life crisis to re-evaluate the ideas and ideals of one's youth in the light of experience. *Enduring Love* leaves the reader with an impression of disappointment and loss of faith in goodness, morality and any kind of spiritual values. There is humour in the description of what became of the hippies of the late 60s and early 70s. It is hard to imagine that McEwan had once belonged with this group, wore his hair long, took drugs and drove a bus to Kabul. The task of integration which he had flirted with earlier is now relegated to the sphere of frank insanity and a laughable and pathetic small subculture of insignificant drop-outs mouthing old platitudes and living in unattractive squalor with criminal associations:

> the marginal life was no longer original, the shortage of desirable possessions no longer a kind of lightness, and here came the universal message from the bones and sinews; the writing was on the skin, it was in the mirror. (*EL*, p. 190)

McEwan's 'emotional engagement with feminism is less deferent'.[41] Clarissa's letter, expressing a sensitive and intuitive understanding of the problems between herself, Jed and Joe, fails to placate Joe's resentment:

> [It] simply drove us further apart. Fifteen years ago I might have taken it seriously, suspecting that it embodied a wisdom, a delicacy that I failed in my bullish way to grasp. I might have thought it my duty, part of my sentimental education, to feel rebuked. But the years harden us into what we are, and her letter appeared to me simply unreasonable. I disliked its wounded, self-righteous tone, its clammy emotional logic, its knowingness that hid behind a highly selective memory. (*EL*, p. 222)

Jung comments on this hardening of attitudes:

> The nearer we approach to the middle of life, and the better we have succeeded in entrenching ourselves in our personal standpoints and social positions, the more it appears as if we had discovered the right course and the right ideals and principles of behaviour. For this reason we suppose them to be eternally valid, and make a virtue of unchangeably clinging to them. We wholly overlook the essential fact that the achievements which society rewards are won at the cost of a diminution of personality. (*MM*, p. 119)

Joe's bitter reproach speaks of 'fifteen years' of the June versus Bernard, or Maisie versus Albert, type of argument, which had been dignified as the opposition of female versus male consciousness but in reality is a power game with obscure or poorly negotiated rules. It is difficult to win outright and nothing less than unconditional surrender is acceptable. Joe's present stance seems to have shifted back into an 'I'm right therefore you're wrong' position, unhelpful to integration but presumably necessary for his self-esteem. There is a sadness and a sense of inevitability about the marital discord which echoes Jeremy's early repetition compulsion. Jason Cowley feels:

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[41] Mars-Jones, 'I Think I'm Right, Therefore I Am', p. 16.

> Reading of the sad, slow disintegration of Joe's relationship with his wife, it is hard to believe that McEwan has not drawn on his troubled experiences with his own wife, Penny Allen, from whom he recently separated. A source of tension is thought to have been Penny's flamboyant spiritualism. McEwan, by contrast, describes himself as having a 'secular spirit'.[42]

Clarissa is childless and infertile, romantic, sensitive and perceptive. She may share some aspects of McEwan's former wife and the 'lovely girl', much as the earlier wives of Stephen and Jeremy seem to share some attributes of Penny and his mother. Joe and Clarissa's parents are barely mentioned and this couple have no children, past or present. Joe is content to allow Clarissa to compensate for her childlessness in her own way but he himself does not suffer from the lack of offspring. As Mars-Jones says: 'At one time, it would have seemed inconceivable for Ian McEwan to write a novel with a childless couple at its heart, so central did parenthood seem to his idea of human completeness'.[43] Ten-year-old Harry appears briefly at the beginning of the story. At first, he seems to be yet another of the endangered and unhappy children who are scattered throughout McEwan's fiction. He is the focus of the moral dilemma and the potential victim of the accident, caused as it later transpires by the carelessness of his grandfather. He does not benefit from the attention of the adults rushing to his aid: 'Harry curled up tighter. He flinched each time we said his name...He was in paralysis of will, a state known as learned helplessness, often noted in laboratory animals subjected to unusual stress' (*EL*, p. 11). Left to himself, he relaxes enough to take action and save himself. Harry may turn out to be the last word on the sufferings of McEwan's internalised child. Dr Logan's children also seem to manage their grief for him surprisingly well and it is Mrs Logan who is unable to come to terms with her husband's death. There may be an element of wishful thinking in this change of attitude to the pain of children, which may be linked with McEwan's divorce. His attitude to the potentially heroic self-sacrifice of Dr Logan in a failed attempt to save Harry, may be a way of buttressing his decision to break up the family and exculpate himself. He told Jason Cowley: 'I still live near my wife and have my children half of the time. Oxford is the centre of my life, and my children are the central relationship in my life'.[44] Annalena lives in Primrose Hill, while he and Penny 'live separately in Oxford, to be near their two school-age children'.[45]

In the novel the married lovers have the sort of politically correct, close relationship which depends on: 'Emotional comfort, sex, home, wine, food, society' (*EL*, p. 36). Joe's arid atheism[46] and

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[42] Cowley, 'The Prince of Darkest Imaginings', p. 9.
[43] Mars-Jones, 'I Think I'm Right, Therefore I Am', p. 16.
[44] Cowley, 'The Prince of Darkest Imaginings', p. 9.
[45] P.H.S., 'New Penny', p. 22.
[46] When Jed wanted them to pray together Joe refused 'Because, my friend, no one's listening. There's no one up there', *Enduring Love*, p. 26.

Clarissa's immature and sentimental agnosticism[47] can not support them when their world is suddenly shown to be neither good nor sane. The accident and the meeting with Jed Parry 'marked the beginning and, of course, an end' (*EL*, p. 8). They are no more able to have a row and clear the air than Mary and Colin in *The Comfort of Strangers* or Julie and Stephen in *The Child in Time*:

> She is especially bad at arguments. She has never been able to accept the rules of engagement which permit or require you to say things that you do not mean, or are distorted truths, or not true at all...[Joe's] emotions are slow to shift to anger in the first place, and even when they have, he has the wrong kind of intelligence, he forgets his lines and cannot score the points. (*EL*, p. 86)

Neither Joe's nor Clarissa's attempts to understand the situation help any more than 'the talking cure':

> There were deep emotional reactions that ducked the censure of the higher reasoning processes and forced us to enact, however vestigially, our roles - me, the indignant secret lover revealed; Clarissa the woman cruelly betrayed. (*EL*, p. 101)[48]

Joe projects blame onto Parry: 'It was Parry's artful technique of suggesting a past, a pact, a collusion, a secret life of glances and gestures, and I seemed to be denying it in just the way I would if it had happened to be true' (*EL*, p. 100). There is no reasonable way in which Parry can be responsible for Joe's behaviour towards Clarissa or for the:

> silent accusations rippling over our heads like standards. To her I was manic, perversely obsessed, and worst of all, the thieving invader of her private space. As far as I was concerned she was disloyal, unsupportive in this time of crisis, and irrationally suspicious. (*EL*, p. 139)

The best illustration of the change in McEwan's relationship to his unconscious is provided by his use of the image of the helium balloon: 'I was looking for a device to bring together complete strangers...Something like a car accident might have been right but I wanted something unusual'.[49] In sharp contrast to the instant identification of the black dogs as a symbol of evil, his conscious mind fastens on the balloon accident[50] as a paradigm for a moral dilemma: 'I saw it immediately in terms of selfishness and altruism'.[51] According to Freud, flying is symbolic for sexual intercourse and in this novel, there is a subtle suggestion that falling in love is as dangerous as falling out of it. Apart from 'flights of fancy', 'falling in love' and 'coming down with a bump', the deeper symbolism of the balloon is over-looked and yet the unconscious meaning is not far from the surface in both *Enduring Love* and in interviews. McEwan explains: 'if you all hang on, you can bring this balloon down to earth. But as

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[47] Clarissa perceived 'Logan's fall [as] a challenge no angel could resist and his death denied their existence', *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[48] This kind of comment is new for McEwan. He seems to be offering straightforward psychodynamic explanations and including some psychological jargon. Many schools of Family Therapy, notably that of Nathan W. Ackerman, *The Psychodynamics of Family Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1958), deal with family stability and breakdown. Much of this is explained lucidly and amusingly by Robin Skinner and John Cleese in *Families and How To Survive Them* (London: Methuen, 1983).

[49] Dwight Garner, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Salon* (http://www.salonmagazine.com/books/int/1998/03/cov_si_3/nt.html).

[50] The balloon accident actually happened in Southern Germany in 1994. It involved a man and his grown up son who both fell and died.

[51] Blake, *'Enduring Love'*, p. 71.

soon as anyone breaks rank, then madness follows'.[52] A helium balloon is a man-made contraption which is inflated by a man-made gas. Its purpose is to lift man high above the earth where he is vulnerable to strong winds and becomes unsafe unless special precautions are adhered to. Ordinary language provides the metaphor of 'keeping your feet on the ground' and 'getting inflated with your own importance', and Jung speaks of inflation with the archetype as the cause of psychosis. The myth of Icarus warns of the danger of hubris involved in 'flying too high'.

Joe's attempts to come to terms with the accident involve comparatively complicated rationalisations about the origins of morality, egoism and altruism and offer McEwan a platform for the expression of his convictions:

> If consciousness like ours came about by blind chance, and might never come again, then it too is precious beyond reckoning. If morality was not handed to us by a supernatural entity, but developed because we come from a long line of social creatures who have had to learn how to rub along in groups, then the more we know about our origins in the story, the better we can apply our chance-given reasoning to our moral codes.[53]

However, the simple statement: 'The child was not my child, and I was not going to die for it' (*EL*, p. 15), is reminiscent of Leonard's rationalisations of the atrocities perpetrated on Otto in *The Innocent*. It illustrates McEwan's attempts to derive moral principles from the theory of evolution and evokes an echo of his much admired E. O. Wilson[54] and Bert Holldobler's book *The Ants*, which describes ant warfare during which:

> A certain fighter under duress explodes kamikaze fashion, destroying several enemy ants with toxic substances - an excellent trade-off in Darwinian terms...Where tens of thousands of ants are closely related sisters, altruism obviously makes sense; self-sacrifice will ensure the continuance of shared genes. [55]

McEwan seems to be more closely identified with Joe than with his other protagonists, except Stephen in *The Child in Time*. The opinions expounded by Joe in the novel are indistinguishable from many of McEwan's newspaper articles. A comparison between Joe's attitude to his work and McEwan's article on E. O. Wilson's essays reveals two men speaking with the same voice: 'biology shapes our culture and, reciprocally, our culture affects biological evolution by creating the social environment in which genes are tested by natural selection'.[56] Again, in his article on evolution, he states: 'We may also reflect that the creation story of evolution, unlike those of religions, has the

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[52] Dwight Garner, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Salon* (http://www.salonmagazine.com/books/int/1998/03/cov_si_3/nt.html).
[53] Ian McEwan, 'The Wonder is We're Here at All', *The Times* (8 June 1998), p. 20.
[54] McEwan reviewed E. O. Wilson's book on consilience which seeks to explain human moral dilemmas in terms of biology in his article 'Move Over, Darwin', *The Observer* (20 Sept. 1998), p. 13.
[55] Ian McEwan, 'Evolution of a Life's Work', *The Financial Times* (12 July 1997), p. 5.
[56] *Ibid.*

unusual characteristic of being demonstrably true - which is just one more aspect of its beauty'.[57] This article sparked off a brisk response from readers of *The Times*. No less than three rebuttals of his ideas appear a week later (June 16 1998). Dr Denis R. Alexander (Head of the T Cell Laboratory, Cambridge) quotes a survey of leading American scientists,[58] which shows that:

> the overall 40 per cent level of belief in a personal God has remained remarkably stable in the scientific community during this century [and] biologists have a higher level of belief compared to physicists and astronomers.[59]

Joe shares McEwan's mid-life identity crisis. Originally a promising research scientist, he has settled for a career as: 'a journalist, a commentator, an outsider to [his] own profession' (*EL*, p. 77). When depressed he occasionally complains: 'I would never get back to those days, heady in retrospect, when I was doing original doctoral research on the magnetic field of the electron' (*EL*, p. 77). In spite of material success, he occasionally feels that he has missed an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to work that really matters. McEwan tells Dwight Garner:

> I do think that the discovery of scientific method and the achievements of inquiring scientific minds do rank with the highest artistic achievements. They rank with the work of Shakespeare, or the painting of the Sistine Chapel.[60]

In this novel McEwan abandons the high moral ground of public concerns and the field of politics, restricting himself to small face-to-face groups and long-term dyadic relationships. He appears to have lost patience with the anima/animus debate and is doing his best to settle for some kind of reasonable certainty, in an identification with masculine consciousness. He may have been encouraged in this by the obviously acrimonious divorce from Penny Allen who 'accused him of stealing her experiences and beliefs for his stories'.[61] He turns his back on the point of view which had been upheld by his ex-wife. He has always claimed the rational and scientific position as his own, while keeping an open mind and some investment in the feminine principle. The masculine principle expressed by lower phallic preoccupations had been worked through in the early stories and higher masculinity had been identified as the spirit of science and intellect. McEwan distrusts the 'wind and tempest' aspect of the Spirit which 'bloweth where it listeth'. Equally he resents the attempts of creeds and religions to tie the Spirit down by rules and regulations. More recently he seems to have devoted much thought to a rational moral code derived from biology and evolution:

We're descended from generations of people who *survived*, who acted successfully. But who

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[57] McEwan, 'The Wonder is We're Here at All', p. 20.
[58] E.J. Larson and L. Witham, 'Survey: Religious Belief Among American Scientists', *Nature* (1997), 435 - 436.
[59] Dr D.R. Alexander, 'Evolution With or Without God', *The Times* (16 June 1998), p. 23.
[60] Dwight Garner, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Salon* (http://www.salonmagazine.com/books/int/1998/03/cov_si_3/nt.html).
[61] Lawson, 'Sex, Lies and the Metafictional Texture', p. 22.

> also co-operated successfully; so we clearly need to save our own skins and look out for our own interests, but we're social animals and we need other people dearly.[62]

He had left his spiritual crisis unresolved with Jeremy in *Black Dogs* and in this novel re-projects it into Jed and Joe.

In the late 90s McEwan seems preoccupied with the need to distance himself from the feminine principle and face the 'perils of the soul' from inflation by the archetype of the Spirit which often takes on the image of the father. Jung believes that individuation, involving as it does the expansion of consciousness, threatens the individual with twin dangers: from the outside by knowledge of the world, leading to the arrogant over-valuation of the intellect at the expense of feeling and a sense of godlike power over nature and other people; from within by identification with figures from the universal unconscious, leading to a sense of oneness with God and the psychotic delusion that God's will is identical with one's own. Jed is sure that: 'God and Parry were one and between them they would settle the matter of our common fates' (*EL*, p. 153). Joe opts for a commitment to the masculinity of the intellect. As Clarissa says: 'The trouble with Joe's precise and careful mind is that it takes no account of its own emotional field' (*EL*, p. 83). Importantly, as Michael Wood points out: 'What Joe can't acknowledge is the amoral strength of his fear'.[63]

McEwan's once much debated morality can now be reduced to a simple proposition: 'Mostly, we are good when it makes sense. A good society is one that makes sense of being good' (*EL*, p. 15). The experience of relief at the sight of a comrade's death has been described by soldiers involved in trench war:

> *that man is dead.* I felt a warmth spreading through me, a kind of self-love, and my folded arms hugged me tight. The corollary seemed to be: *and I am alive.* It was a random matter, who was alive or dead at any given time. I happened to be alive. (*EL*, p. 19)

An event of this sort can be the basis of faith in divine protection or life-long survivor guilt but Joe presses the conclusion: 'Good people sometimes suffered and died, not because their goodness was being tested, but precisely because there was nothing, no one to test it' (*EL*, p. 32). It is his faith in the power of science to provide answers which prompts him to search the world psychiatric literature for an explanation of Jed's infatuation with him. McEwan explains his interest in De Clerambault's syndrome: 'Stalkers have been in the news a great deal in the past few years...What intrigued me was the manner in which this syndrome holds up a distorting mirror to our most valued experience - that of falling in

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[62] Dwight Garner, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Salon* (http://www.salonmagazine.com/books/int/1998/03/cov_si_3/nt.html).
[63] Michael Wood, 'When the Balloon Goes Up', *The London Review of Books* (4 Sept. 1997), p. 8.

love'.[64] Topical or not, stalking is by no means a new preoccupation for the author. In 1978 he adapted 'Solid Geometry' for television and proposed that Mary Maddox should play the disappearance scene naked stressing that: 'The camera has to be told how and what to look at' (*IG*, p. 13). In 1980 he wrote *The Imitation Game*. Kiernan Ryan comments: 'The empathetic portrayal of Cathy's heroic defiance harbours a darker fantasy in which the predatory eye of the camera stalks a lone female to her doom' (*Ryan*, p. 31). In 1981 *The Comfort of Strangers* begins with the stalking of Colin and Mary by Robert and ends in an obscene and sadistic murder. In *Black Dogs* evil stalks not only June but potentially anyone in Europe, while 'Jeremy stalks his surrogate parents with a ravenous, intrusive absorption' (*Ryan*, p. 64).

Stalking or being stalked can be understood as the activity of the shadow and illustrates the impossibility of repressing unconscious material permanently. Neither is it possible to separate oneself from it for ever, by projecting it into someone else, because they will stalk or attract stalking behaviour in an effort to unite the self and the shadow in the service of wholeness. The difference between repression and suppression is very clearly demonstrated when Joe and Clarissa sustain the shock of Logan's death and suppress it, postponing the attempt to deal with it until later when they are safe in their home: 'we backed away from that moment again and again, circling it, stalking it, until we had it cornered and began to tame it with words' (*EL*, p. 29).

Joe falls prey to intellectual arrogance and overconfidence in his own judgement. There is no 'almost', or 'perhaps' about his insistence that he is 'obviously, incontrovertibly right, and she was simply mistaken' (*EL*, p. 92). If Clarissa had chosen to argue on Joe's terms, she might have said that some 'victims' file false claims of being stalked. There is even a recorded case of a stalker who 'pre-empts [his] victim's complaints by accusing [him] of being the stalker'.[65] Joe solves his problem with the help of his own intelligence and the scientific method, supported by reputable world authorities and implements his answer with a gun.

There is, however, a small but significant allowance for the imperfection of Joe's omniscience in the story of the colour of the sorbet. Adam Mars-Jones begins his review of *Enduring Love* with this and devotes a disproportionate amount of space to it:

> Immediately before he lies to the police, or to himself, or merely the reader, Joe has been thinking about a truth free of self-interest, doubting whether a willed objectivity can save us from our ingrained habits of mind...To introduce, at this late stage, an unreliable narrator is

[64] Anon, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: BoldType* (http://www.bookwire.com/boldtype/imcewan/read.article).
[65] M. Pathé, P.E. Mullen, and R. Purcell, 'Stalking: False Claims of Victimisation', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 174 (Feb. 1999), p. 170.

> perverse - it recapitulates on the level of gimmick the novel's central theme, that unreliability is an ineradicable part of what we are.[66]

Whatever might be the rights and wrongs of psychodynamic formulations, McEwan now moves towards the idea that clinical psychiatry, belonging as it does to medicine and therefore sharing the scientific respectability of that discipline, can provide Joe with the answer to the question of the Spirit and the irrational forces in human affairs. In the pursuit of his research, he side-steps the reality of Jed's pain and need for sharing the recent trauma by immersing himself in the intellectual contemplation of De Clerambault's syndrome:

> a man who had a theory about pathological love and who had given his name to it, like a bridegroom at the alter, must surely reveal, even if unwittingly, the nature of love itself. For there to be a pathology, there had to be a lurking concept of health. (*EL*, p. 128)

Pathé and Mullen conclude: 'The pathological extensions of love not only touch upon but overlap with normal experience, and it is not always easy to accept that one of our most valued experiences may merge into psychopathology'.[67] This pathology was first described long ago. Cases had been described by Hippocrates, Erasistratus, Plutarch, Galen, Gideon, Harvey (physician to Charles II), Winslow, Clouston and Kraepelin.[68] Jaques Ferrand wrote a treatise in 1623 on 'Maladie d' Amour' or 'Melancholie Erotique'. In 1639 Bartholomy Pardoux, a Paris physician, discussed the pathology of love in his book *Diseases of the Mind.* De Clerambault referred to these cases as 'les psychoses passionelles' and contributed a monograph on the subject bringing together most of the published clinical material.[69] A revival of interest in this syndrome in America, France and Russia (no less than 14 recent publications in French and Russian are summarised in abstract form in a library search from the Royal College of Psychiatry) is due to the increase in the frequency of criminal charges brought against stalkers:

> Recognising that 'stalking behaviour causes anguish and fear for the victim, and sometimes culminates in profound and lasting physical injury', the New York State Legislature amended the law on menacing and harassment [in 1992].[70]

Erotomania is classified as a delusional disorder, fulfilling the American Psychiatric Association's criteria.[71] Many variations of this syndrome are described and some are regarded as primary[72] while

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[66] Mars-Jones, 'I Think I'm Right, Therefore I Am', p. 16.
[67] M. Pathé and P. Mullen, 'The Pathological Extensions of Love', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 165 (1994), 614 - 623.
[68] J.W. Lovett Doust, and H. Christie give a brief historical outline in 'The Pathology of love: Some Clinical Variants of De Clerambault's Syndrome', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 12 (1978), 99 - 106.
[69] C.G. De Clerambault, 'Les Psychoses Passionelles' in *Oeuvres Psychiatriques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1942), pp. 315 - 322.
[70] R.B. Harmon, R. Rosner and H. Owens, 'Obsessional Harassment and Erotomania in a Criminal Court Population', *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 42 (March 1995), p. 188.
[71] Erotomania is credited with being an occasional symptom of twenty-two categories of disorder. The pure, or primary form is classified as a 'delusional disorder'. The generally accepted classification is based on the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd edn., revised (Washington: APA, 1987), p. 616.
[72] The primary erotomanias are described by P. Ellis and G. Mellsop in 'De Clerambault's Syndrome: a Nosological Entity?', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 146 (1985), 90 - 95.

others are secondary to schizophrenic[73] and other psychotic illnesses,[74] or to organic damage to the brain.[75]

The classical case, described by De Clerambault and referred to in *Enduring Love*, which involved a woman's belief that the curtains in Buckingham Palace signalled King George V's undying passion for her, is quoted in all the textbooks, beginning with Kretschmer.[76] Although most of the cases are women who become obsessed with a man of a higher social standing than themselves, Pathé and Mullen state: 'Pathologies of love occur in men and women, the homosexual and the heterosexual, in both Western and non-Western cultures'.[77] They attempt to draw the boundaries between the infatuation of falling in love, the state of being in love, reactions to unrequited love and the pathological erotic fixation, in spite of the lack of response from the beloved. This last borders on erotomania proper which they accept as a genuine psychosis. In their study of sixteen cases they note:

> The boundary issues are particularly acute in instances where there has been some form of real relationship, however fleeting, between the individual and the object of his affection....The act of love, even if unrequited, is itself still accompanied by a feeling of great happiness, regardless of whether it occasions pain and sorrow. For those whose life is empty of intimacy, the rewards of even a pathological love may be considerable.[78]

This is well illustrated by Jed's letter from the mental hospital: 'But the joy! The thousandth day, my thousandth letter...This happiness is almost an embarrassment to me...I live for you. I love you' (*EL*, p. 245). Pathé and Mullen document the effects of pathological love on the victims:

> The lives of the victims were disrupted by telephone calls, letters and in most cases repeated approaches. Several were physically assaulted and [some] were sexually assaulted. [One,] in a jealous rage attacked and killed the object of his affections.[79]

Perez writes: 'The increasing awareness of the potential threat presented by these disorders is leading to an explosion in legislation designed to protect the victims from such unwanted attention'.[80]

> Parry shows most of the personality traits expected in such cases. Typically one finds:
>
> a socially inept individual isolated from others, be it by sensitivity, suspiciousness, or assumed superiority. These people...[are] living socially empty lives, often working in menial occupations, and being or feeling themselves to be unattractive. The desire for a relationship is balanced by a fear of rejection or a fear of intimacy, both sexual and emotional.[81]

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[73] Erotomania, secondary to schizophrenia, is described by M. Hayes and B. O'Shea in 'Erotomania in Schneider Positive Schizophrenia', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 146 (1985), 661 - 663.
[74] These less common psychoses sometimes include erotomania among the symptoms as described by E. Kraepelin in *Manic Depressive Insanity and Paranoia*, trans. M. Barclay (Edinburgh: Livingstone, 1921).
[75] Almost any organic damage can lead to symptoms of erotomania, as described by Y.Y. El Gaddall in 'De Clerambault's Syndrome (Erotomania) in Organic Delusional Syndrome', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 154 (1989), 714 - 716.
[76] A reference can be found in E. Kretschmer, *A Textbook of Medical Psychology*, an early psychiatric textbook, trans., E.B. Strauss (London: Hogarth, 1952).
[77] Pathé and Mullen, 'The Pathological Extensions of Love', p. 614.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 621.
[79] *Ibid.*
[80] C. Perez, 'Stalking: When Does Obsession Become a Crime?', *American Journal of Criminal Law*, 20 (1993), 263 - 280.
[81] Pathé and Mullen, 'The Pathological Extensions of Love', p. 620.

Once established, the clinical picture shows all the characteristics of erotomania, although it is not clear if this is primary or secondary because it seems to include his religious ideas which may, or may not be psychotic in origin. Morbid infatuations are characterised by:

> An intense infatuation without the need for any accompanying conviction that the affection is currently reciprocated; the object of the infatuation either doing nothing to encourage the feelings or clearly and repeatedly rejecting any continuing interest or concern; the infatuation preoccupying the patient to the exclusion of other interests, resulting in serious disruption of their lives; the subject insisting on the legitimacy and possible success of the quest; a persistent pursuit of the object of affection, often with gradually escalating intrusiveness; [and] significant distress and disturbance, usually occasioned to the object of the infatuation.[82]

McEwan's research is impeccable and extensive. It supports the wish to distance homosexual strivings, spiritual revelation and stalking behaviour into a character who is incontrovertibly proved to be psychotic.

The presentation of case histories of mental patients is not a new departure for McEwan. 'Conversations with a Cupboard Man' is written like a session with a diagnosed mental patient. The protagonist in 'Butterflies' is clearly a paranoid or borderline psychotic. Some of the other more bizarre protagonists in the short stories seem to invite a psychiatric diagnosis. In the case of Jed Parry, however, this is emphasised and a laborious effort is made to prove this point of view beyond a shadow of a doubt. The novel ends with Appendix 1 which claims to be a reprint from the *British Review of Psychiatry*, a non-existent journal. The case history (like the preface to *Black Dogs*) seems to be a précis of the story. The discussion takes up the professional tone of a psychiatric paper. It emphasises the parallels between the case presented and the body of facts available on De Clerambault's syndrome[83] in the professional literature, including the outcome and the known effects on the patient's immediate environment. It concludes with a list of twenty references from British, French, American, Canadian and Scandinavian journals of psychiatry, criminology, social science and medicine, dealing with this syndrome. All these references are authentic except for two relevant papers by T. Gillett, S. R. Eminson and F. Hassanyeh: 'Primary and Secondary Erotomania: Clinical Characteristics and Follow Up', *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, vol. 82 (1990), 65 - 69; and 'Homosexual Erotomania', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 154 (1988), 128 - 129. These are changed by McEwan to R. Wenn and A. Camia (1990) 'Homosexual Erotomania', *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, vol. 85 (1990), 78 - 82.[84] Like the name of Jonny B. Well, the drug pusher, the names of Dr Wenn and Dr

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[82] *Ibid.*, p. 618.

[83] The delusion involved in De Clerambault's syndrome is in a different category from an adolescent's romantic infatuation which might lead to a normal love relationship, because in the mind of the patient there exists an unshakeable conviction of an overwhelming passion outside him/herself and solely in the mind of a person whom s/he believes to be his/her admirer.

[84] Here are more echoes of the footage of film shot during the Conservative Party Conference in *The Ploughman's Lunch*.

Camia are a joke, an anagram of Ian McEwan. This is particularly interesting given the following:

> I devised what they call in Hollywood a back story for Wenn and Camia: that they are a couple of homosexuals, who are only interested in homoerotic behaviour. If you look at their other published paper, it is called Homosexual Erotomania, and was published in Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, which is a real journal and the most obscure that I could find. I submitted the fictional paper for publication but now I feel terribly guilty because the journal I sent it to has written back saying that it is considering it for publication.[85]

It is tempting to wonder what a Freudian might make of Wenn and Camia (a couple of homosexual psychiatrists) invented by the author to give an academic explanation of the relationship between Joe and Jed.

There are no learned papers to help a psychiatrist to establish a prognosis for a relationship which begins in a dramatic and stressful incident and proceeds to a friendship because repudiation of any relationship by the object of passion is pathognomonic of this condition. Nor is Joe's treatment of Jed consistent with his belief that he is seriously mentally ill. He shows him no compassion and makes no effort to mobilise the medical or psychiatric services on his behalf. He is alarmed by Jed's wish to intrude into his life and mind and probably insulted by his assessment of his published work as: 'a puny rant against an infinite power' (*EL*, p. 135). He seeks the protection of the police for himself and when this fails, he buys a gun illegally. The more benevolent view, together with a psychodynamic formulation of the problem of Jed Parry, is left to Clarissa. Innocently unaware of the existence of the serious pathology of De Clerambault's syndrome, she initially thinks she understands Parry: 'A lonely inadequate man, a Jesus freak who is probably living off his parents, and dying to connect with someone, anyone, even Joe' (*EL*, p. 81). Her suggestions for dealing with Jed happen to be unhelpful but her insight into Joe's difficulties with him is accurate: 'He's not the cause of your agitation, he's a symptom' (*EL*, p. 84). Jed's handwriting is similar to Joe's and she is never at home when he phones so that her suspicion that Joe has invented him seems very plausible. McEwan makes it clear that he intended this to be a 'red herring'. When asked about Clarissa's attitude to Joe's plight, he says: 'The reader is supposed to be wondering whether he can trust this narrator [Joe]...Clarissa has a point; though, in the end, she's wrong and Joe is right. Jed posed much more of a threat than she ever realised'.[86] In the novel, Joe says: 'This wasn't "some poor fellow". It was a man bound to me like the farm labourers by an experience, and by a shared responsibility for, or at the very least, a shared involvement in, another man's death' (*EL*, p. 58). If this is so, he abdicates this shared responsibility in

[85] P.H.S., 'Shrink to Fit', *The Times* (2 Sept. 1997), p. 22.
[86] Eric Schoeck, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Capitola Book Cafe* (http://www.capitolabookcafe.com//andrea/mcewan.html).

the same way as the farm labourers who avoid reminders of the accident, while his own identification with Jed extends to his being able to say: 'I felt like a mental patient at the end of visiting hours. "*Don't leave me here with my mind*", I thought, "*Get them to let me out*"' (*EL*, p. 58). Joe seems to grasp that Jed is as much a part of his own inner world, as he is part of Jed's alleged psychosis: 'Perhaps I could muster a little detached curiosity. When this story was closed it would be important to know something about Parry. Otherwise he would remain as much a projection of mine as I was of his' (*EL*, p. 60). The power struggle between them is like the contest between the ego and the shadow, described repeatedly in mythology as the theme of the 'hostile brethren'.[87]

McEwan transfers June's beliefs into Jed. Her experience of pure evil followed almost at once by anantiodromia,[88] vouchsafes for her the opposite experience of pure goodness and light:

> She tried to find the space within her for the presence of God and thought she discerned the faintest of outlines, a significant emptiness she had never noticed before, at the back of her skull. It seemed to lift and flow upwards and outwards, streaming suddenly into an oval penumbra many feet high, an envelope of rippling energy...'coloured invisible light' that surrounded her and contained her. If this was God, it was also incontestably herself. (*BD*, p. 149)

This is remarkably similar to Jed's experience of falling in love with Joe:

> Often, God was a term interchangeable with self. God's love for mankind shaded into Parry's love for me. God was undeniably 'within' rather than in his heaven, and believing in him was therefore a licence to respond to the calls of feeling or intuition. It was the perfect loose structure for a disturbed mind. (*EL*, p. 152)

Jeremy regards June's experience as potentially valid but Jed's experience is understood in terms of clinical psychiatry which defines a specific psychosis. Neither Clarissa nor the policeman (who significantly refuses to see anything mad or criminal in Jed's behaviour) agree with Joe: 'He loves his God, he loves you, and I'm sorry about that, but he hasn't broken the law' (*EL*, p. 157).

It is possible to view Jed, Robert in *The Comfort of Strangers* and the protagonist of 'Butterflies' as personifications of the shadow. McEwan admits that 'Butterflies' is 'one of the worst things I could think of. Yet in a nightmarish way I could indulge in it, in the idea of it'.[89] Robert and Jed are receptacles for repudiated violent, homosexual and irrational attitudes which Colin and Joe have banished into the unconscious. Clarissa seems to understand this: '[She] considered Parry my fault. He was the kind of phantom that only I could have called up, a spirit of my dislocated, incomplete character, or of what she fondly called my innocence' (*EL*, p. 102). McEwan seems to be increasingly

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[87] Examples of this are scattered throughout mythology: Gilgamesh and Engidu; Jacob and Esau; Cain and Abel; Christ and Satan.
[88] Jung used this term to describe the process by which the extremes suddenly turn into one another, showing that opposites are closer to each other than to 'the middle way'.
[89] Hamilton, 'Points of Departure', p. 20.

aware of the reality of the dangers lurking in the personal, as well as the collective, shadow. In his early work he leaves the fate of wrong-doers in the hands of the police ('Butterflies', *The Cement Garden*, *The Comfort of Strangers*), or unpunished (*The Innocent*), while in *Enduring Love* he finally decides to face the need to control the perpetrator, in order to protect the victim. Parry's fate is not as benevolent as it might seem. Lawyers and psychiatrists alike advise against the plea of 'not guilty by reason of insanity'[90] because such patients are usually committed under section 37 of the Mental Health Act (1983)[91] and can end their lives in Broadmoor, while straightforward crimes of violence receive a limited sentence with the hope of remission for good behaviour. Judging by Jed's letters, the treatment aspect of his incarceration is totally ineffective.[92] For him the mental hospital provides no more than long-term preventative detention.

In 1998 McEwan is able to claim: 'I find that life is rich, diverse, fabulous and extraordinary, conceived without a God'.[93] It remains to be seen whether Jed's prophecy eventually comes true: 'It's only a matter of time, and you'll be grateful when the moment comes...one day you'll be glad to say, Deliver me from meaninglessness' (*EL*, p. 136). If so, McEwan will not be the first iconoclast and prophet of atheism to join the Church of Rome. His shadow already knows that science, able as it is to answer the question 'how?' neither asks nor seeks to answer the question 'why?' It is Jed who tells Joe: 'Describing how the soup is made isn't the same as knowing why it's made, or who the chef is' (*EL*, p. 135).

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[90] The Mental Health Act was amended to substitute the McNaughton rule allowing for a plea of 'guilty but insane' into 'not guilty by reason of insanity', HMSO.

[91] Hospital and guardianship orders allow courts to order hospital admission or the reception of the patient into guardianship. They are only applicable to individuals found guilty of an imprisonable offence (except murder). Two doctors must agree that the patient is suffering from one of the forms of mental disorder. The order is for six months unless renewed for a further six months (then annually). A Magistrates' Court may make the hospital order without recording a conviction on an accused person, *The Mental Health Act* (1983).

[92] 'There is a misplaced pessimism about the management of these conditions', Pathé and Mullen, 'The Pathological Extensions of Love', p. 622.

[93] Eric Schoeck, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Capitola Book Cafe* (http://www.capitolabookcafe.com//andrea/mcewan.html).

Chapter 11 - Conclusion

> Time and time again, the Self incarnates itself and then becomes independent of the archetypal incarnation which it first assumes, then casts off and destroys.[1]

One example of this is the change from matriarchal to patriarchal order, so fraught with difficulty for McEwan. As Ryan writes:

> Time after time, in fantasy if not in fact, the mother must be killed off, the child must be violated, and the tell-tale body must be hidden away, to shore up the ramparts of a masculinity doomed to live under permanent siege. (*Ryan*, p. 12)

McEwan was fifty years old in 1998 when he won the Booker Prize for *Amsterdam*. He had been publishing short stories, novels, dramas, a book for children, the libretto for an oratorio, articles and book reviews in the major newspapers and magazines since 1972. He adapted Timothy Mo's book *Soursweet* for the cinema and translated *Rose Blanche* from an Italian children's book by Roberto Innocenti and Christophe Gallaz. *Black Dogs* has been translated into Polish. Several of his stories have been made into films after adaptation by Andrew Birkin (*The Cement Garden* in 1992), Harold Pinter (*The Comfort of Strangers* in 1991) and himself (*The Innocent* in 1995). Apart from the occasional hiccough (like *The Good Son* in 1993) his films have not been blockbusters but have nevertheless attracted reasonable reviews, although he is better known for his books than for his dramas. He has certainly lived up to his ambition: 'There must be a middle patch when you just become a working writer, someone who turns out a book every two years and that's it'.[2] He is not a prolific writer. He is serious and somewhat obsessional about his work: 'I try to make sure that I'm sitting at my desk by nine or nine-thirty in the morning...My ideal rate of work is around 500 words a day'.[3] William Leith describes his method. He works intensively on the composition of sentences: 'He writes only a few paragraphs each day. Sometimes less. Then he pares them down. He uses the spaces between sentences, the moments where the reader pauses, to do some of his work'.[4]

The meticulous precision of his language is very important to McEwan. His skill is such that the finished product bears no traces of the effort of creation. Most readers can finish any one of his books at one sitting and maintain total concentration throughout. He claims to enjoy writing:

> what McEwan loves most is shutting himself away in his study. Six hours a day he sits there...'I love the self-pleasuring in writing. The sheer pleasure. The secrecy. The secret

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[1] E. Neumann, *The Child* (New York: G.P. Putnam's and Sons, 1973), p. 183.
[2] Anon, 'Master of the Short, Sharp Shock', p. 32.
[3] Danziger, 'In Search of Two Characters', p. 13.
[4] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 4.

excitement'.[5]

Both creativity and individuation take place in solitude but there is a price to be paid for the pursuit, as well as the neglect, of these goals. As most people seek the fulfilment of their lives in intimate relationships, the artist may prove to be a disappointing partner although Storr firmly holds the belief that: 'If we did not look to marriage as the principal source of happiness, fewer marriages would end in tears':[6]

> Two opposing drives operate throughout life: the drive for companionship, love and everything else which brings us close to our fellow men; and the drive toward being independent, separate and autonomous.[7]

These two drives are particularly clear in McEwan's life and work: 'The creative person is constantly seeking to discover himself, to remodel his own identity and to find meaning in the universe through what he creates'.[8] McEwan's interest in politics, and recent advances in science, keep him in touch with the world at large. He records detailed, objective observations in his notebooks:

> I...have a habit of watchfulness...how people are with their children...couples, married or otherwise...the maps are really routes to material in my own head, conflicts, wish fulfilments, dreads, my own past.[9]

He never describes places far removed from his own experience. When he lived in a bed-sitting room in London (1970), so did his characters. When he worked on an eel farm or took part as an extra in unremarkable films, his characters did the same in 'First Love, Last Rites' and 'Cocker at the Theatre'. When he went on holiday to Venice with Penny Allen, before they were married, Colin and Mary in *The Comfort of Strangers* do the same thing. After McEwan's marriage, Stephen Lewis in *The Child in Time* is presented as a married man. Alexander in *Black Dogs* is born in 1983, the same year as William, McEwan's first son. When McEwan got divorced, Joe and Clarissa in *Enduring Love* narrowly miss this fate. Their reconciliation is as unconvincing as Maria and Leonard's reunion in *The Innocent*, or the persistence of bliss in Jeremy and Jenny's marriage and parenthood in *Black Dogs*. His characters keep pace with him in the ageing process and follow him around the world on his travels. They share his interests and wrestle with his problems. They demonstrate upward social mobility, gradually acquire material affluence and enjoy the upper-middle class life-style which resembles his own.

Once established as a professional writer, most of his main and supporting characters share

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[5] Leith, 'Sex, Death and Hidden Perversions', p. 9.
[6] Anthony Storr, *Solitude* (London: Flamingo, 1989), p. XIII.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. XIV.
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Danziger, 'In Search of Two Characters', p. 13.

this occupation. Albert in 'Solid Geometry' is editing his great-grandfather's memoirs. Sally Klee in 'Reflections of a Kept Ape' is suffering from writer's block after her first successful novel. James Penfield in *The Ploughman's Lunch* is writing a book about the Suez crisis. David Lee in *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration* is preparing an autobiographical novel. Stephen Lewis in *The Child in Time* is an established writer of children's books. In *Black Dogs*, June has published three books, including a book on meditation, Bernard, a biography of Nasser, and Jeremy is preparing June's memoirs. Peter Fortune in *The Daydreamer* grows up to be a writer. Joe Rose in *Enduring Love* is a journalist and publicist of scientific theory. McEwan either wrote, or could have written, any one of these books and articles himself. His thoughts on the life-style of his fictional authors are interesting. He said of Stephen Cook in 'In Between the Sheets':

> I was uneasy about the way I had him pursuing his writing in a way that takes him away from any real relationship to a point when he is deeply fearful of women and their pleasure: that's reflected in the rather arid way he sets about his day's work, filing things, writing in a ledger, counting the number of words. (*NI*, p. 171)

He once said of himself:

> I wanted to break the isolation of writing fiction. I had no other job and I was far less reconciled than I am now to the essentially crackpot activity of sitting down alone several hours a day with an assortment of ghosts. (*IG*, p. 9)

This isolation, together with his self-confessed fear of being left out of meaningful human relationships finds expression in his characters' obsessional life-styles.

There is an opportunity to exercise power in the freedom to use words and images, by an author, in a way that no one can control their environment or themselves. Every detail in the writing can be perfected in order to create an illusion of total control. Albert reduces Maisie to verbal reports of her conversations with him, while avoiding and ignoring her as much as possible.[10] In this way she becomes 'material' for his self-appointed task. A sense of omniscience is easily sustained by the skill of surfing the internet where information on everything, in great depth, is instantly available. A sense of omnipotence is afforded by the power to decide the fates of fictional characters. It is possible by this means to sublimate obsessional drives and, with talent and sophistication, what might have been a handicap in life can be transformed into a conspicuously successful career. Some obsessional traits are evident in McEwan's method of writing. The effort to tidy the plots and ideas neatly and produce a polished finish are commented on by reviewers throughout his career. Michael Wood writes: 'it seems absurd (and ungrateful) to complain that things are sometimes *too* well done...there is...risk of

[10] *Black Dogs* is a similar recording of talks with June, while her terminal illness does not evoke much sympathy from Jeremy.

claustrophobic neatness...an unwillingness to leave well (or more often, wonderfully-rendered ill) alone'.[11] James Wood, who complains about 'the anxious discipline of his prose style', notes: 'he has become increasingly a novelist who trades in narrative surprises...his novels suffocate with design'.[12]

McEwan's relationship to his protagonists is of great interest. His fiction presents a variety of figures who can be understood as dissociated parts of himself which struggle to achieve integration. A thread of continuity runs through the characters of Henry in 'Disguises', the protagonists in 'Last Day of Summer' and 'First Love, Last Rites', Jack in *The Cement Garden*, Colin in *The Comfort of Strangers*, Stephen in *The Child in Time*, Leonard in *The Innocent*, Jeremy in *Black Dogs* and culminates in Joe Rose in *Enduring Love*. These are shy, repressed, unhappy and often orphaned boys and confused adolescents who grow up to be troubled but sensitive men and eventually shed their complexes, find a strong masculine identification, show conspicuous intellectual development, and achieve material affluence and high social status. These creations can be viewed as approximate equivalents to McEwan's persona. Peter Fortune is the only boy lucky enough to escape major traumas, and seems to represent an ego ideal.

To balance these attractive and sympathetic characters, there are the embodiments of the shadow - exaggerations of negative traits or failures to overcome personality problems. Albert in 'Solid Geometry' is schizoid and obsessional, Robert in *The Comfort of Strangers* is sadistic and violent, Charles in *The Child in Time* is severely neurotic and Jed in *Enduring Love* is frankly psychotic. The two main characters in *Amsterdam*, Linley and Halliday, demonstrate conspicuous success in the world balanced by an equally conspicuous moral bankruptcy and emotional chaos. It is tempting to regard them as an early attempt at integrating the persona and the shadow into ambivalent but whole personalities. Certainly, neither of them is innocent and there is no doubt that their right hands know well enough what their left hands are doing, the usual rationalisations and intellectualisations not withstanding.

Reading McEwan is like dreaming someone else's repetitive dream:

> A series of dreams makes a more satisfactory basis for interpretation than a single dream, for the theme which the unconscious is presenting becomes clearer, the important images are underlined by repetition, and mistakes in interpretation are corrected by the next dream...Some dreams have considerably more than personal significance; such dreams are often vivid, and make use of surprising and even incomprehensible symbols, and their relationship to the dreamer is difficult to trace. These Jung classes as collective dreams, and to understand them use must often be made of historical and mythological analogies to find

[11] Michael Wood, 'Well Done, Ian McEwan', *The London Review of Books* (10 May 1990), p. 24.
[12] James Wood, *Too Hard and Clean: Electronic Mail and Guardian* (http://www.mg.co.za/mg/books/nov97/3nov-mcewan.html).

what the symbols meant to other men in other times.[13]

It is easy to recognise in this description, the Gothic set pieces of McEwan's novels. Jung believes that dreams change over time as their message becomes more understandable to consciousness. He makes it very clear that the Great Mother initially finds her first representative in the personal mother and continues to share some aspects of the anima. In this way, the timeless qualities associated with the eternal feminine: maternal solicitude, empathy, magic authority, wisdom and spiritual exaltation; as well as passion, darkness and destruction, are projected onto real women, in the absence of rituals which tie them firmly to sacred religious symbols.[14] In his later writing, McEwan seems to try to bring the image of the Great Mother down to earth by presenting increasingly human and fallible heroines whose power and wisdom are limited by individual imperfections, unlike the observer in the Einsteinian Universe whose 'power is limitless because it does not reside in her alone' (*OSWD*, p. 15). The personal experience of relationships gives shape and colour to the archetypal predisposition to perceive Woman in this way. McEwan seems to be aware of this:

> I'm not one of these people who can endlessly write fiction out of a direct transposition of personal experience. I work best when I have this illusion of total invention, an illusion which later reveals itself to be connected with my own real life.[15]

It is tempting to seek parallels between the women in McEwan's life and the heroines of his fiction. It seems likely that the knowing little girls have some connection with his cousin Paula who shared his bed in childhood. The precocious adolescents may be modelled on the partners of his adolescent adventures. The passionate and sexually experienced women, may have echoes of the mysterious first wife who was mentioned for the first time in *The Mail on Sunday*.[16] There is also his half-sister, who was adolescent during his formative years and whom McEwan only ever mentions in passing, and 'Elaine' to whom he dedicated *First Love, Last Rites*.

All the female characters are more knowing than the males. This gender difference is noticeable throughout McEwan's work and even very young girls (Connie in 'Homemade', Jane in 'Butterflies', Linda in 'Disguises and Marie in 'Two Fragments') are 'knowing' but this does not infringe their basic innocence. The same heart-stopping intensity described between Linda and Henry when they lie naked together in her bed: 'She rolled over to face him...this was the beginning and end of his

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[13] Frieda Fordham, *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1953), p. 98/9.

[14] Four stages of the anima are postulated by Jung. Some well known examples of anima symbols are: St. Mary Magdalene (the whore); Holy Mary (mother of God); St. Teresa the little flower (chastity); the church and religious community (the body of Christ); the chalice of the Eucharist (the Holy Grail). The stages are described in C. Jung, M.L. von Franz, J.L. Henderson, J. Jacobi and A. Jaffe, *Man and His Symbols* (London: Picador, 1978).

[15] Mathur, 'Nice Not Nasty', p. 45.

[16] Sarah Oliver, 'The Strange Story of a Wife Who Gives Birth While Her Husband's Mistress Watches...and Why it Shocks the Booker Prize Winner', *The Mail on Sunday* (1 Nov. 1998), p. 46.

Sunday' (*FLLR*, p. 121), recurs between Leonard and Maria: 'In terms of mere physical sensation, this was the high point of the six hours, and perhaps of his life' (*I*, p. 61). Perhaps Jeremy and Jenny's three days and nights in the Hotel Wisla had a similar quality of overwhelming passion. Bernard and June start their marriage with much sexual ardour: 'I urgently wanted sex with Bernard...I knew that if he asked, if he insisted, I would have no choice. And it was obvious that his feelings were intense too' (*BD*, p. 55). It seems safe to assume that Penny Allen is the prototype for Mary in *The Comfort of Strangers*, Julie in *The Child in Time*, Jenny in *Black Dogs* and possibly Mrs Logan in *Enduring Love*. This figure is described as independent, caring, and sexually responsive. She is a mother but also very much her own person with her own ideas and beliefs. It is likely that McEwan tries both to live out in his life and to portray in his fiction, the relationship of equality and partnership which the feminists demand as a right and the New Man and New Woman strive to achieve.

Married or not, sex becomes, in time, something very different from the passionate and vertiginous experience with the youthful partners, who carry the projection of the first stage of the anima (symbolised by the figure of Eve or sometimes of the whore), which represents 'purely instinctual and biological relations'.[17] Once tamed by repetition, in a setting of domesticity, it takes its place as an expression of belonging and becomes the mundane, comfortable, married love. The wife can be seen as the second stage of development of the anima, personifying: 'a romantic and aesthetic level...characterised by sexual elements'.[18] When we compare the following three quotations, the similarities in the sexual relationship with Mary, Julie and Jenny are unmistakable: 'Their lovemaking had no clear beginning or end and frequently concluded in, or was interrupted by, sleep' (*CS*, p. 18); 'They had made love just after dawn, but sleepily, inconclusively' (*CT*, p. 14); 'Some minutes later that may have been interrupted by a brief doze, we began the companionable love-making that is the privilege and compromise of married life' (*BD*, p. 67). In spite of protestations of love and devotion, the married protagonists keep their relationships in the background and spend most of their time alone or with other people and away from the family. All three novels portray a life of separation, with occasional reunions. This may reflect McEwan's need for solitude and his involvement in travelling as part of his commitment to film directors and publishers. His curious third marriage, which seems to have been established as a part-time arrangement from the beginning, may represent an acceptance of the need for privacy and solitude.

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[17] Jung et al., *Man and His Symbols*, p. 195.
[18] *Ibid.*

The third degree of development of the anima: 'a figure who raises love, (*Eros*) to the heights of spiritual devotion',[19] may have some echoes in Molly in *Amsterdam*, with whom the original sexual relationships have been transmuted into life-long friendships, albeit at a distance. The fourth stage is symbolised by the spirit of wisdom, prophecy and spiritual guidance. Thelma in *The Child in Time* and June in *Black Dogs* could be seen as representatives of this stage. McEwan's new marriage is still very new and it is possible that future fiction will contain some pointers to its success. He says: 'Even though I don't regard myself as a particularly autobiographical writer, I have to live through some more life before something else can begin'.[20]

McEwan's attitude to children has undergone a remarkable change. Babies and children appear in his short stories as remote, vulnerable and victimised while the internalised child is implied but never directly presented. In *The Child in Time*, the birth of the baby is the climax and resolution of the whole story and seems to have echoes of the Nativity bringing with it a promise of redemption and atonement. This could be the internalised child, lost and later reborn. Parents, tragically lost or rejected in the early fiction, are finally accepted in *The Child in Time* and being a parent becomes possible and hopeful. Children and parents then gradually disappear from the novels, although they are mentioned in passing in *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*. Peter Fortune in *The Daydreamer* seems to be the sort of boy that McEwan wishes he had been. *Enduring Love* contains the upbeat message that children are tougher than adults suppose and manage their own grief and traumas, if left alone.

The theme of homosexuality appears sporadically in McEwan's fiction. He flirts with it in playful hints and delicate allusions in 'Solid Geometry'. Maxwell knows that the Church views 'copulation *a posteriori* [as] a sin ranking with masturbation and therefore worthy of forty penances' (*FLLR*, p. 11), a doctrine based on the teachings of a seventh-century theologian - Theodore. The friendship between him and the great-grandfather is based on a mutual meeting of needs and the sharing of pleasures. Maxwell provides the seminal ideas from his extroverted experience, which the great-grandfather receives, elaborates creatively in his theories, and hoards for posterity in his diaries. Maxwell adopts the active male role and the great-grandfather, the passive, female role. In this they behave like compatible sexual partners but there is a tacit agreement between them that basic decencies must be observed. They get around the censor of the superego by affecting a scholarly pseudo-scientific attitude to forbidden topics. The sexuality is symbolic until scene 43, when their manic mood,

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[19] *Ibid.*
[20] Danziger, 'In Search of Two Characters', p. 13.

coupled with the intake of alcohol, may threaten the appearance of behaviour that warrants 'forty penances'.

In 'Homemade' and 'Pornography', and again as late as *Amsterdam*, relationships between men and boys are more important than family ties or heterosexual romances. Homosexuality surfaces briefly in the character of Turner in *The Imitation Game* because Turing, who was a known homosexual, served as the prototype for Turner. Sexual attraction between men is so contaminated with sado-masochism in *The Comfort of Strangers* that it passes almost un-noticed. McEwan seems to keep pace with the changes of public attitude towards this preference. He alludes to the criminalisation of it in the 40s: 'He was a homosexual and suffered for it at the hands of the law' (*IG*, p. 15), hints at the dangers of AIDS so topical in the 80s: 'I was only just beginning to attend funerals regularly, so far exclusively secular affairs for three friends who had died of AIDS' (*BD*, p. 63) and reflects the acceptance of the Gay lifestyle in the 90s: Clarissa and Joe have 'neighbours, a successful architect and his boyfriend who keeps house' (*EL*, p. 54). When he comes to focus this theme in the relationship between Joe and Jed, homosexuality is inextricably mixed with religion and both are presented as symptoms of Jed's psychosis. Joe denies and rejects the temptation of Jed's love but is unable to extend to him the tolerant understanding shown by Clarissa. The issue is finally spelled out in Joe's question: 'Are we talking about sex? Is that what you want?' (*EL*, p. 66). The answer is left open in the comment that: 'He seemed to think this was unfair' (*EL*, p. 66). Jed avoids sexual advances but makes it clear that he wants Joe to leave Clarissa, live with him and share his religious faith. Joe, projects his own unwanted homosexual strivings onto Jed to the extent that he is able to say: 'It was as if I had fallen through a crack in my own existence, down into another life, another set of sexual preferences, another past history and future' (*EL*, p. 67). In McEwan's fiction the close proximity of homosexuality seems to present both a threat and a temptation throughout life, in spite of satisfactory marriage, but never becomes a personal choice or the fully realised experience. This is not surprising for a writer who lived his adolescence in the 'sexual hell'[21] of a state boarding school for boys and in youth made close friendships within a small group of all male peers: 'The explosive success of *First Love, Last Rites* brought him into a social circle centred on the *New Statesman*..."All boys. All wildly funny and obscene.'"[22]

The theme of cross-dressing, stretches from 'Disguises', through *The Cement Garden* and

[21] Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 4.
[22] Walter, 'Looks Like a Teacher. Writes Like a Demon', p. 2.

culminates in the fate of Garmony in *Amsterdam*. It is closely related to regression which stretches from 'Conversations with a Cupboard Man', through *The Cement Garden* and *Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration*, to culminate in the fate of Charles in *The Child in Time*. This choice of themes which are revisited at intervals is reminiscent of the 'working through' of repressed complexes which are eventually resolved in consciousness, and identified as a dead end, so that they lose the power to fascinate, and join other memories and ideas simply as material available for inclusion in fiction.

The shifts in McEwan's attitude to politics, morality, the spiritual life and religion reflect the changes in his social and material circumstances and in his inner life. His early liberal and left-wing political convictions were strong. He took up a hostile stance towards rules and regulations, law enforcement by the police and the patriarchal and hierarchical arrangement of society: 'I am emphatically a unilateralist' (*NI*, p. 182), 'I believe quite passionately in the democratic procedures' (*NI*, p. 183). His slow drift towards a position slightly left of centre became evident 1983 when he spoke of Ann Barrington:

> very few of us could occupy a position of total radical opposition without becoming bitter... I think there is a time in your life when you have the energy to do that, and then you hope another generation will come along to take up the task. (*NI*, p. 188)

The Child in Time is strongly 'anti-Thatcher' but even at this stage Daniel Johnson notes:

> he freely admits that he is not exempt from the ubiquitous 'greed' which he accuses Mrs Thatcher of legitimising...McEwan's alienation from power is no longer total. He is very much aware of its attractions, and he is far less dogmatic in his rejection of authority than many other left-wing writers. Indeed, it is questionable whether McEwan is still a man of the left in any serious sense.[23]

Black Dogs carefully documents both the sudden and the gradual abandonment of communism and radical socialism through the examples of June and Bernard. In *Enduring Love*, the large canvas of politics is de-focused and McEwan's earlier feminist sympathies are re-examined and modified. It is usual for youthful rebels to gradually move towards the centre, if not the right, of politics with age and affluence. In his Utopia, McEwan concedes the need for incarceration of disturbed and anti-social individuals:

> If you'd asked me twenty-five years ago I would have said there'd be no police force but I've sort of come round to the view that actually, some people do behave so vilely that you've just got to put them in the slammer to protect the rest of us.[24]

His representation of policemen in *Enduring Love* and *Amsterdam* is positively flattering.

In his short stories neither religion nor morality is openly presented, although both are palpably

[23] Johnson, 'The Timeless and Timely Child', p. 17.
[24] O'Donnel, 'Utopia and Other Destinations', transcript.

present in the background. Adam Mars-Jones writes: 'in McEwan's early fiction...the reader had no feeling that the characters were being measured against a code of conduct...Moral judgements were for some years studiously withheld'.[25] In spite of this, McEwan has always claimed that he is a moralist. He speaks of the need to resist the moral puritan streak that shaped the short stories: 'My instincts as a writer...tell me that those stories are more effective if those morals are not pointed out'.[26] In the preface to *A Move Abroad* he insists that: 'By measuring individual human worth, the novelist reveals the full enormity of the State's crime when it sets out to crush that individuality' (*MA*, p. XII).

Morality and religion are traditionally linked by the idea that a creator is responsible for human nature and therefore has the right to lay down prescriptions and proscriptions for human behaviour. McEwan accepts the scientific principles of genetics and evolution which support the existence of human nature and struggles with the need to derive meaningful guidelines for conduct without reference to a higher power. As genetics and evolution have no concern with the individual after s/he has passed on their genes to the next generation (just when the mid-life crisis with its goal of individuation comes into its own) this task is difficult and there is a simplistic and thin sound to his recent pronouncements about: 'those great conflicts in our lives between altruism and that other primary necessity of looking after yourself'.[27] He put forward a different idea when he told Annalena McAfee:

> I think it is a crucial part of one's sanity to imagine things other than they are. The ability to imagine yourself as someone else must be at least part of the basis of morality. Behind cruelty must lie a failure of the imagination, of empathy.[28]

It is possible to argue that empathy may be genetically determined, like the capacity to make attachment bonds, and therefore subject to the laws of evolution.

McEwan's father was 'not a religious man'[29] and his own experience did not introduce him to the solace or power of religion:

> My background predisposed me deeply against organised religion. It was a weak, turgid, C of E business...mouthed but not believed. I was at boarding school, with five assemblies a week and a Sunday service. Everything was weary...all the best known and most resonant passages were ruined for me. They were read over and over again by people without conviction to a coerced, shuffling mob of schoolboys.[30]

He writes of the life in boarding school: 'We were at an age when we craved secret societies, codes, invented rituals and hierarchies'.[31] This is the age when boys let go of 'mother's apron strings' and seek

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[25] Adam Mars-Jones, 'Have a Heart', *The Observer Review* (6 Sept. 1998), p. 16.
[26] Mathur, 'Nice Not Nasty', p. 44.
[27] Eric Schoeck, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Capitola Book Cafe* (http://www.capitolabookcafe.com//andrea/mcewan.html).
[28] McAfee, 'Dreams, Demons and a Rare Talent to Disturb', p. 21.
[29] O'Donnel, 'Utopia and Other Destinations', transcript.
[30] McEwan, 'Me and My Psyche', p. 20.
[31] McEwan, 'The Unforgettable Momentum of a Childhood Fantasy', p. 15.

status in male peer groups. McEwan was depressed and withdrawn at this period and may have felt left out of these 'secret societies' or found himself at the bottom of these 'hierarchies' which favour extroverted, aggressive boys who excel in competitive sports and group games. This may have contributed to his difficulties in making a timely shift from the matriarchal to the patriarchal orientation: 'The hostility of the...ego to the lower feminine world of the mother-dragon goes hand in hand with its attachment to the higher masculine spirit world'.[32] The only spiritual experience McEwan claims as his own occurred in his childhood and represents a mystical merging with the material (maternal) world symbolised by sea and landscape:[33]

> During a school holiday when I was 10, my mother dropped me off at the beach on her way to work. It was 8.00 o'clock in the morning as I walked along the bluff that overlooked the long curve of beach and calm water. The early morning sunlight made everything familiar look newly made, and I remember stopping, quite overcome by joy and a feeling of oneness with the world.[34] In retrospect it seems to have been a moment of an intensity described by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*.[35]

William James writes:

> This overcoming of all usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness.[36]

This first awareness of the sacred as 'the ground of being', in whom the ego can dissolve in passive, effortless bliss, may contribute to his wish to regress to childhood, and even to the intra-uterine unity with the feminine principle, as well as his wish to be a girl and his 'sure sense' of the power of women. As Ryan says:

> growing into a man means suppressing everything habitually identified with the mother and the feminine, everything which threatens to expose the brittle artifice of male autonomy...But the will to remain hard, clean, and contained is repeatedly undermined by the yearning to relapse into that abject ecstasy in which manhood evaporates and the whole system of differences on which patriarchy depends collapses in scandalous confusion. (*Ryan*, p. 12)

As far back as 1987 McEwan spoke openly about his agnosticism:

> I'm hovering around belief, but I don't think I'll ever come down the road far enough to be a Christian. I can't believe in a humanised, vengeful, wrathful God...My God so far is a fairly wishy-washy one, suffering a little from a lack of definition.[37]

The icon of the Mother and Child seems to have preserved its numinosity for McEwan. It is represented in the oratorio and underlies his feminist political leanings. In *The Child in Time*, he is

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[32] Neumann, *The Child*, p. 197.
[33] Both the sea and the landscape are symbols for the Great Mother.
[34] McEwan mentions a similar merging with the world later, as a result of taking mescaline, in *The Imitation Game*, p. 11.
[35] McEwan, 'An Only Childhood', p. 41.
[36] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1903), p. 419.
[37] Mathur, 'Nice Not Nasty', p. 46.

reaching out to the image of the Great Mother from a need to experience her in her positive aspect. This may account for the celebration of birth and motherhood which form the climax of this novel. Adam Mars-Jones notes that: 'there began, above all in *The Child in Time*, the invoking of certain values, particularly the decommissioning of the male ego in favour of a new personality attuned to women and children'.[38]

Having dethroned the 'great patriarch in the sky', McEwan is left with dim intuitions of an earlier epoch when God (the Great Mother) ruled supreme. Fromm describes this matriarchal phase:

> the highest being is the mother. She is the goddess, is also the authority in family and society...Mother's love is unconditional, it is all-protective, all-enveloping: because it is unconditional it can also not be controlled or acquired. Its presence gives the loved person a sense of bliss; its absence produces a sense of lostness and utter despair...mother's love is based on equality. All men are equal, because they are all children of a mother, because they all are children of Mother Earth.[39]

Attractive though this sounds, the goddess certainly suffers from 'a lack of definition'. The concepts of justice and merit have no place in this scheme and the Mother deals life and death arbitrarily. Nothing is right or wrong, all simply is.

All archetypes are morally ambiguous and can be experienced from their positive or negative side. The archetype most intimately connected with McEwan's concept of evil is the negative aspect of The Great Mother. The development of this archetype is carefully traced in mythology and comparative religion by Carl Jung,[40] Erich Neumann[41] and James Frazer.[42] Kiernan Ryan has drawn attention to the theme of matricide in McEwan's work. In the chapters of this thesis, an effort has been made to focus the elements of the collective unconscious in order to explain some of the more incomprehensible eruptions of violence and perversion met with until *The Child in Time* and *Enduring Love* when they become reclassified as madness. Matricide is an essential component of the hero myth which is at the root of religions, legends, works of art (both sacred and profane) and countless stories told in many historical epochs and places. The same theme, with minor variations, is as follows: an adolescent son leaves home on a perilous journey and faces terrible dangers (swamps, traps, labyrinths and threats of being devoured by monsters or dragons). If he overcomes the obstacles and kills the beast he can return home, take his place amongst the men and marry the maiden. Madness and death are the penalties for failure in these tasks. On the face of it, this could be a metaphor for the

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[38] Mars-Jones, 'Have a Heart', p. 16.
[39] E. Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (London: Thorsons, 1995), p. 58.
[40] C. Jung, *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).
[41] E. Neumann, *The Great Mother* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).
[42] J. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (USA: The Softback Preview, 1996).

transformation of the boy into a man. The Jungian model identifies the hero with the ego or consciousness and the dragon with the Terrible Mother, who is the negative aspect of the mother archetype.

This theory holds that consciousness requires a separation from the maternal unconscious and that this act imposes a burden of guilt and a sense of sin (original sin) which requires expiation and atonement:

> The patriarchal development of consciousness leads by an undeniable inner process to 'matricide', to the greatest possible negation, exclusion, devaluation and repression of matriarchal elements.[43]

The hero myth belongs to the male rites of passage in adolescence and it is especially relevant to McEwan's work, which often depicts a young innocent being initiated into the world of men. The ritual of symbolic matricide liberates the initiate from thraldom to the female world but there is a price to pay for this 'crime':

> When the Self incarnates itself in an archetype, this archetype represents a supreme value for the ego. Consequently the transformation of the Self compels the ego...to kill what has hitherto been the supreme value...But for the ego this inevitably means anxiety, guilt feelings and suffering, because from the standpoint of the older manifestation of the sacred, the manifestation of the next higher stage of the Self is dangerous and sinful.[44]

Initially, in prehistoric time, the ritual sacrifice of the annual King or Consort of the Priestess of The Great Mother was practised - later the King's own first born son, later still any child of the tribe. Eventually slaves, criminals and sacred animals were substituted for the King. Christianity is the final version (to date) of the myth where sacrifice procures salvation.[45] The Son of God offers Himself willingly as the sacrifice once and for all. This act is repeated symbolically in the sacrament in which His body and blood are consumed under the guise of bread and wine: 'But centuries of mind-numbing dogma, professionalization and enmeshment in privilege have all but annihilated the mystical and spiritual experience that is said to be at the heart of Christianity' (*OSWD*, p. 11). In McEwan's fiction, elements of long forgotten pagan rites and rituals surface from the collective unconscious in the Gothic set pieces describing the killing of animals, castration, murder, dismemberment, the letting of blood and consuming of parts of the victim.[46] The Great Mother has death, sex and birth in her domain and this may explain the close connection between violence and sex in much of his writing. Her rites also

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[43] Neumann, *The Child*, p. 204.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 182.
[45] The ascendancy of the father God, in patriarchal monotheism, has rearranged the elements of the myth, leaving the mother to grieve for her son, who's death is an atonement for sins against the father and his law (sins of commission and omission).
[46] Otto's dismemberment in *The Innocent* involved much spilling of blood. Leonard removed a piece of him from his teeth with a toothpick and Maria wrapped pieces of his body in plastic containers, much as meat is sold in the Supermarket.

involve the defloration of virgins, orgies of food and wine and sometimes the ritual consumption of drugs. Thus the hero myth represents not only the individual's need to break the tie of dependency to the mother but also to transform the original identification with feminine into masculine values and accept a patriarchal world order:

> Under the pressure both of nature and of the collectivity the individual must...look upon the archetype relevant to his phase of development as an incarnation of the Self and as his supreme, directing value. Thus in the matriarchal phase to regard the father archetype as a supreme value passes for sacrilege, while under the patriarchate...it is sacrilege to regard the mother archetype as a supreme value.[47]

Moving forward to embrace the masculine principle is difficult for McEwan as he experienced the negative aspect of the archetype of the Spirit (the Father) vividly and set himself against it. This is especially clear in his pronouncements against patriarchy and his rejection of secrecy and reflects itself in his outlook on God's law. In the introduction to the libretto for the oratorio, he makes his position clear:

> whatever moral or spiritual resources are necessary for us to avoid destroying ourselves they are unlikely to be provided by the world-weary bureaucracies of the established churches, nor by any religious sect that claims that it alone has the ear of God. (*OSWD*, p. 10)

Jung explains the connection between spiritual experience, dogma and ritual:

> the priest is concerned only to establish an undisturbed functioning of the psyche within a recognised system of belief. As long as this system gives true expression to life...the psyche[48] cannot be regarded as a problem in itself...But as soon as [man] has outgrown whatever local form of religion he was born to - ...the psyche becomes something in its own right which cannot be dealt with by the measures of the Church alone. (*MM*, p. 232)

Dogma and ritual, as well as the sacramental rites of passage, help to confirm the archetypal truths. If the spiritual experience is lacking, it is easy to dismiss the male mysteries as a 'fraud perpetrated on women' by men, especially when: 'this spirit...in its religious, ethical, artistic and scientific form comes into conflict time and time again with visible reality whose archetypal representative is the Great Mother as nature and as the visible, tangible world'.[49]

McEwan's strong aversion to all organised religion rests on his understanding of it as an 'intellectually contemptible and morally dubious heap of rules'.[50] He feels that: 'The notion of a God who cares whether you shop on Sunday seems to be trivial and demeaning'.[51] He clearly sees it as another manifestation of the patriarchal monopoly on power and an instrument of subjugation of

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[47] Neumann, *The Child*, p. 185.
[48] Here in the sense of soul or the totality of the personality made up of both consciousness and the unconscious.
[49] Neumann, *The Child*, p. 197.
[50] Pilkington, 'Berlin Mon Amour', p. 29.
[51] Cowley, 'The Prince of Darkest Imaginings', p. 9.

women, children and the lower social strata. It is easy to see in this, a rooted objection to what Fromm describes as the second stage of human evolution, the patriarchal phase:

> In this phase the mother is dethroned from her supreme position, and the father becomes the Supreme Being, in religion as well as in society. The nature of fatherly love is that he makes demands, establishes principles and laws, and that his love for the son depends on the obedience of the latter to these demands...patriarchal society is hierarchical; the equality of the brothers gives way to competition and mutual strife.[52]

It is easy to see that rejection of Christianity in its Church of England version and failure to identify with the personal father and other male models in school (and in McEwan's case with the higher echelons in the Army), would rob the archetype of the Father of its numinosity and meaning:

> The secret of the masculine order and the core of its mysteries is that this upper masculine-spiritual principle is invisible, just as the wind (breath)...is a mover but cannot be seen. This invisibility, especially when contrasted with the evident visibility of the feminine earth and blood mysteries of menstruation, pregnancy and child-bearing, compels the man to keep secrecy and to exclude women from their mysteries. Another reason for this is that invisibility can so easily be mistaken for non-existence and so often is mistaken for it by the earth-bound mind of women and men alike.[53]

The conflict of the Father God versus the Mother God occupies a large part of *Black Dogs*, presented as the opposition between male and female consciousness: 'It will not do to argue that rational thought and spiritual insight are separate domains and that opposition between them is falsely conceived (*BD*, p. 20). Jung asserts the precise opposite of this point of view and points out the need to transcend the present level of consciousness so as to realise: 'the mysterious truth that spirit is the living body seen from within, and the body the outer manifestation of the living spirit - the two being really one...' (*MM*, p. 253). McEwan seemed to be trying to square this circle in the 1980s:

> The supreme intellectual achievement of western civilisation, and its most potent shaping force - science - has perhaps reached a point where it might no longer be at odds with that deep intuitive sense - which seems to have been always with us - that there is a spiritual dimension to our existence, that there is a level of consciousness within us at which a transcendent unity may be perceived and experienced. (*OSWD*, p. 14)

His failure to achieve this in *Black Dogs*, which may be related to his divorce from Penny Allen, has produced a firm turning towards the masculinity of the intellect. He now feels that: 'We often talk of science and religion as being from two different spheres, not contradictory. I don't really go along with this. I think they do embrace, in some respects, mutually exclusive ideas of the world'.[54] In *Enduring Love*, he seems to abandon the search for some resolution to this paradox and becomes entrenched instead in his rational atheism. Reconciliation between science and religion is possible if Jung's ideas

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[52] Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, p.58.
[53] Neumann, *The Child*, p. 197.
[54] Eric Schoeck, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Capitola Book Cafe* (http://www.capitolabookcafe.com//andrea/mcewan.html).

can be embraced:

> In my picture of the world there is a vast outer realm (the realm of science) and an equally vast inner realm (the realm of Gnostic religion); between these two stands man, facing now one and now the other, and...taking the one for the absolute truth by denying or sacrificing the other. (*MM*, p. 137)

This mistake can be avoided if it is understood that:

> our whole world of religious ideas consists of anthropomorphic images that could never stand up to rational criticism. But we should never forget that they are based on numinous archetypes, i.e., on an emotional foundation which is unassailable by reason. We are dealing with psychic facts which logic can overlook but not eliminate.[55]

By 1997, McEwan moves towards the recognition of the potential benefits of belonging to a religious community, when he attributes Jed's madness to the fact that:

> There were no constraints of theological nicety or religious observance, no social sanction or congregational calling to account, none of the moral framework that made religions viable, however failed their cosmologies. Parry listened only to the inner voice of his private God. (*EL*, p. 152)

Jed's position is shared by June in *Black Dogs*, who builds her whole life on her personal experience of God and her solitary pursuit of contact with Him in meditation:

> I suppose all the great world religions began with individuals making inspired contact with a spiritual reality and then trying to keep that knowledge alive. Most of it gets lost in rules and practices and addiction to power. That's how religions are. In the end though it hardly matters how you describe it once the essential truth has been grasped - that we have within us an infinite resource, a potential for a higher state of being, a goodness. (*BD*, p. 60)

Jung's thoughts on this are illuminating:

> Although the Paraclete was of the greatest significance metaphysically, it was, from the point of view of the organisation of the Church, most undesirable, because...the Holy Ghost is not subject to any control. In the interests of continuity and the Church the uniqueness of the incarnation and of Christ's work of redemption has to be strongly emphasised, and for the same reason the continuing indwelling of the Holy Ghost is discouraged and ignored as much as possible. No further individualistic digressions can be tolerated.[56]

The chief benefit of a belief in a loving and personal God, is that it overcomes the sense of separateness, aloneness and anxiety, by uniting the small, limited and comparatively powerless ego to an omnipotent and omniscient power. In *Black Dogs*, McEwan finally faces the difficulties of paradoxical logic and adversarial argument between the maternal and paternal elements of religion, morality and politics. The threat of absolute evil (the negative aspect of the archetype of the Mother who tears, dismembers, swallows up and eventually gives birth again) is summarised in June's pessimistic prophecy about the dogs roaming the world for ever:

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[55] C. Jung, *Answer to Job* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p. XIV.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

> The evil I'm talking about lives in us all. It takes hold in an individual, in private lives, within a family, and then it's children who suffer most. And then, when the conditions are right, in different countries, at different times, a terrible cruelty, a viciousness against life erupts, and everyone is surprised by the depth of hatred within himself. Then it sinks back and waits. It's something in our hearts. (*BD*, p. 172)

McEwan's pessimism, much more obvious in *Enduring Love* and *Amsterdam* than in his earlier work, may be related to his decision to abandon the quest. Jung observes:

> However far-fetched it may sound, experience shows that many neuroses are caused by the fact that people blind themselves to their own religious promptings because of a childish passion for rational enlightenment. (*MM*, p. 77)

In the later novels there seems to be an approach to:

> the stage of full maturity [when man] has freed himself from the person of mother and of father as protecting and commanding powers; he has established the motherly and fatherly principles in himself...In the history of the human race we see...the same development: from the beginning of the love for God as the helpless attachment to a mother Goddess, through the obedient attachment to a fatherly God, to a mature stage where God ceases to be an outside power, where man has incorporated the principles of love and justice into himself, where he has become one with God, and eventually, to a point where he speaks of God only in a poetic, symbolic sense.[57]

Jung holds that people who do not profess any religion are in danger of trivialising the need for omnipotent protection, which then expresses itself in childish magical superstitions and live under the threat of being overwhelmed by the unconscious at a vulnerable point in their lives, when their intellect proves insufficient to support them through some crisis:

> Rationalism and superstition are complimentary. It is a psychological rule that the brighter the light, the blacker the shadow...the more rationalistic we are in our conscious minds, the more alive becomes the spectral world of the unconscious.[58]

McEwan admits to numerous superstitions.

It is significant that he no longer claims to fall into a dream when he writes or speaks of the pressure to create or the depression which follows the ending of a novel as he did in 1983: 'I can get depressed between writing things. But I know that for me there has to be some silence, and that silence often means getting very fed up' (*NI*, p. 174). He told Haffenden 'I am just daydreaming my way into a novel now' (*NI*, p. 174). Nine years later, he informed Megan Tresidder 'I fall into a dream when I write'.[59] By 1997 he revealed to Michael O'Donnel 'its a long time since I've had a nightmare'.[60] He seems to have abandoned the mythopoetic process and has, once again, moved his work to the extreme pole of conscious manipulation of images and ideas. He now depends on descriptions of objective

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[57] Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, p. 70.
[58] Jung, *Psychological Reflections*, p. 25.
[59] Tresidder, 'The Dreamer Who Creates Nightmares', p. 2.
[60] O'Donnel, 'Utopia and Other Destinations', transcript.

reality and looks to the scientific method to set limits to the scope of his fantasies. Much of the earlier inspiration has left his fiction, with this self-imposed limitation on the flights of the imagination. New unconscious material has disappeared from his books after *The Innocent*, except for a skilful, and possibly carefully contrived, use of universal symbols from the collective unconscious. In *Enduring Love* and *Amsterdam*, as well as in interviews, there is a strong impression of a writer crafting a piece of fiction from various separate elements with an eye on the results of market research and audience response control. Sylvia Brownrigg gives voice to a general feeling that his Booker Prize was: 'in recognition of the fact that he should have won it for...*Black Dogs*, or *The Comfort of Strangers*'.[61] McEwan himself foresaw the dangers of having 'designs on his readers' opinions *before* anything is revealed. The novel then risks becoming not an exploration or investigation, but an illustration of conclusions already reached, the fleshing out of abstractions' (*MA*, p. X). He seems to have fallen into this trap, especially after *Black Dogs*: 'During a recent lecture held in De Balie in Amsterdam, McEwan said he is more and more interested in exposing the fragility of religion as an example of just another system we've invented to give us some kind of order in the Universe'.[62] He now feels that 'issues of morality do become a writer's subject matter'.[63] In spite of a personal rejection of any church or creed, his commitment to science and his aversion to dogma, McEwan, unlike Joe Rose, continues to keep an open mind on the subject of the Spirit:

> Even for atheists, the question of faith has to be an issue of importance. I regard irrational belief as being the essence of faith.[64] It's also an enduring quality of being human - perhaps even written into our natures. No amount of science or logic will shift it. We are all magical thinkers one way or another.[65]

However, he studiously avoids any influence on his work from this quarter and seems to have shut off the unconscious as a force shaping his fiction. The above statement sounds like a concession to the feelings of religious readers or an example of lofty tolerance rather than a signpost to new regions for his imagination to explore.

One of the privileges of studying a living author is the thrill of anticipation of what is yet to come. McEwan seems to have come to the end of the spontaneous gifts from his unconscious but this need not mean that creativity is at an end. It may simply require another 'move abroad'. He says of *Amsterdam* that it is more light-hearted than his previous writing and expresses some qualms about the

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[61] Sylvia Brownrigg, *Making Book on the Booker: Salon* (http://www.salonmagazine.com/books/feature/1998/10/29feature.html).
[62] Anon, *Featured Author: Ian McEwan: American Book Center* (http://www.abc.nl/basement/hansj/text/mcewan.html).
[63] Dwight Garner, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Salon* (http://www.salonmagazine.com/books/int/1998/03/cov_si_3/nt.html).
[64] Jung thinks that the basic structure of the archetypes is inherited and reality only clothes them in images, e.g. demonic possession in the middle ages, or alien abduction in the twentieth century. He discusses this in *Collected Works*, vol. 9.
[65] Anon, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: BoldType* (http://www.bookwire.com/boldtype/imcewan/read.article).

amount of energy and commitment that future writing will demand:

> I could write any of [fifteen stories] but I'm not sure I like them enough. I'd rather do nothing for a while. So I wait and wait and wait. What will it matter when I'm dead? Whether I've written 12 novels or 13.[66]

Before the announcement, McEwan speculated about the Booker Prize: 'It really must be hell to win it. Your privacy must be blown sky high for a year or two. So there's that to bear in mind'.[67] Robert Harris insists: 'no writer who wins the Booker Prize ever succeeds in writing as good a novel again...They may have been bubbling away happily for years, but the moment they've been Bookered the fizz goes out of them'.[68] Storr points out: 'It is...not unknown for creative people, once they have achieved an intimate relationship, to lose some of their imaginative drive'.[69] In view of his need for solitude and privacy, his life may be seriously disrupted for the next year at least. When publicising *Enduring Love* he insisted that he was content with his life at present. His world provides him with a wealth of satisfactions and: 'can have any amount of love in it'.[70] His new part-time marriage, the responsibilities of his broken family, the publicity surrounding his arrangements for access to his sons and finally the Booker Prize, may absorb him and it seems probable that the stories in his head may appear as another collection of short stories, the writing of which requires shorter periods of withdrawal into solitude and concentration on work. However, *Amsterdam* shows an awareness of the increasing probability of physical and mental illness and of death, not as in *Black Dogs* in the parent generation, but in one's peer group and oneself. McEwan's children are approaching the dangerous stage of adolescence and Penny Allen is publishing stories which are already being interpreted by the press as hints of McEwan's secret shortcomings. It is possible that shadows are gathering in the wings.

McEwan's strength lies in his ability to present material from the depth of the unconscious, at different levels of integration with the conscious experience of his characters and the reader. This ranges from gross arrest in the early phases of development (or massive pathological regression to them) through troubled adolescence, to heroic efforts to achieve meaningful interpersonal relationships and intrapsychic wholeness (individuation). Unconscious contents erupt suddenly, become clothed in fantasy and disappear to return in ever-changing but recognisable forms. As they come closer to consciousness they become clearer and more understandable, until they are recognised as a part of the 'there and then' and no longer intrude into the 'here and now' at inappropriate times, or distort emotional

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66 Leith, 'Form and Dysfunction', p. 4.
67 *Ibid.*
68 Robert Harris, 'Fear and Loathing in the Booker Circus', *The Sunday Times* (1 Nov. 1998), p. 19.
69 Storr, *Solitude*, p. 107.
70 Eric Schoeck, *An Interview with Ian McEwan: Capitola Book Cafe* (http://www.capitolabookcafe.com//andrea/mcewan.html).

responses but can be recalled and shaped at will.

It is never possible to be sure that a contemporary writer will be recognised by future generations. One of the prerequisites for this is that his voice should speak for his own time and place in history. Jung believes that the next millennium will witness an expansion of consciousness which will encompass the shadow and the contrasexual archetypes. He also prophecies that a new incarnation of the archetype of the Self will replace the Christian faith in the 'all-good, all-powerful, all-loving Father' who leaves all divine imperfections to contaminate the feminine and boost the shadow with demonic power. No new world order ever came into being without painful regressions and laborious progress and all have had many prophets over hundreds of years. The new era has been prefigured in the mystic marriage of the cosmic parents, usually understood loosely as love. This 'love' may gradually acquire meaning in the lives of increasing numbers of individuals and be seen as incompatible with either the amorphous good feeling towards the earth and all its creatures, or the rigid system of rules behind reason and justice. It can be said that McEwan is at the forefront of the search for new values, independent of the traditional wisdom received from the past. To the extent that he devotes his life and his work to this search, he can be said to articulate the spirit of his time.

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